"The Ought-To-Be's"

"THE OUGHT TO BE'S."

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PREFACE.

The articles herein put into permanent form appeared originally in the Catholic Standard and Times of Philadelphia, Pa. They were written with the hope that here and there, they might, with God's help, renew the courage of those who have thrown down their arms and deserted the standard of Christ. It cannot be repeated too often in the ears of a sin-laden humanity that unrepentence, not sin, has peopled the Abodes of Darkness, that so long as life lasts, so long does the mercy of God reach out lovingly to the most miserable and wretched of sinners, and finally that so long as the world endures, so long will Mary, the Mother of God, be the last hope and sure refuge of even the most abandoned of sinners.

There is a deep-seated belief everywhere in the Church that a renewal of devotion to Mary is the unfailing means, whereby the "ought-to-be" can be, easily and sweetly, brought back to God. May She, out of the superabundance of her Charity and Mercy, extend her favor and protection to him who writes and to those who read.

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CHAPTER I.

What Shall it Be?

Hard to Reach.

The Ought-to-Be Catholic is a hard man to reach He does not go to church; he seldom reads a Catholic periodical; he is rarely surrounded by those influences which make for his conversion. The personal visit of the priest and the judicious distribution of literature bearing upon his case are almost the only means which can be employed to win him back to the path of duty.

Yes, there is another, and perhaps the most effective of all. It is the apostolate of earnest men and women, whose words, but particularly whose example, will succeed when all things else have failed. From the beginning good example has been the best argument. It is particularly effective with those who have wandered from the fold. It is a proof that they also can lead virtuous lives if they will.

Whence Recruited.

The army of ought-to-be Catholics is recruited mainly from those who lead bad lives. I have never heard of a genuinely good Catholic giving up the practice of his or her religion. I have personally met hundreds of bad ones who have.

There is no mystery about the matter. Habitual mortal sin has filled the world with stray sheep. This is a fact as old as Christianity. It needs no proof.

In diagnosing a disease and prescribing a remedy, it is necessary to go to the root of the evil. The root of almost all the defection from the Church is simply and plainly sin, and that species of sin whose wages are eternal death.

There are sheep astray from the fold because they will not hear the voice of the Great Shepherd of Souls. There are recreant children who will not obey and keep His commandments. There are the weak, who have become discouraged long ago, and who feel that it is useless for them to strive after righteousness weighted down as they are with the burden of sinful inclinations and vicious habits. There are those who have grown old in evil ways, who appear as if abandoned to a reprobate sense, and who deem it too late to retrace their steps and begin their spiritual lives anew. These there are and a thousand other forms of the same spiritual malady, having as their root the ancient spirit of rebellion on the part of the intelligent creature against the Creator, who gave it being and intelligence and made it free.

The Greatest Inroad.

This is particularly true of the young men of the present day. They have given up the Church only when vice has woven its web so firmly about them that escape seems impossible. Drunkenness and impurity, and particularly the latter, tell the whole story. The

Sixth Commandment has been the greatest stumbling block. The young man who approaches the sacraments frequently will never become an unbeliever. He will never deny the existence of hell until he has become morally convinced that he cannot escape it. He will never proclaim that he has come up from the lower animals until he has surrendered himself, wholly and entirely, to his animal nature. He will never attack the faith of his fathers until despair of living up to it has settled in his soul.

Some one has said that if there were another passion in the human heart as strong as the sexual tendency, it would be impossible to impose moral restrictions upon humanity. Impurity, in some of its various forms, has been at the bottom of nearly all the great rebellions against the Church. It has made, and still makes, "ought-to-be's" out of countless thousands of those whom the Church most needs and most values—its young men, those who ought to be its pride and its joy in the day of victory, its hope and comfort in the hour of trial.

A Doctrine to Fit.

By a strange perversity of the human heart, the vicious are always found ready to justify themselves for failure to serve God. They will go further and lay the blame for their shortcomings on God Himself God, they claim, has made them as they are, and they cannot help being what they are. They forget that this impious doctrine justifies every species and character of crime, and leads to the subversion of all law

and order. All the laws of the world are based on the principle that man is a free being; that he is capable of choosing between right and wrong. The divine laws are based on the same principle. Theology teaches that the crowning act of God's creation is the free, intelligent being, free with the terrible power to rise up and disobey God Himself; that in the love and obedience of this being, God is exceedingly pleased, but that those who abuse their freedom and disobey shall have no part with Him in His Kingdom.

Some spiritual writer has said that, "with the exception of the predestined souls, such as our Immaculate Mother, and the baptized little ones, every being gifted with intelligence has been placed on trial." The angels had their period of probation. Some were unfaithful and were cast out forever. So shall it be with the unfaithful amongst men. A freedom without punishments as well as rewards is inconceivable.

New in Name Only.

New in Name Only.

I know not if the present age be more corrupt and more luxurious than the ages which have preceded it, but this I do know, that the lot of the Church in this country is cast in dangerous places. A great wave of religious indifference is sweeping across the land. Much of our so-called Christianity is incipient unbelief. There is a universal breaking up of the foundations of men's faith. Morals are woefully relaxed. Is it any wonder, then, that the Church should find it a hard task to reclaim the weak and the erring?

Every priest in the land knows well that the "ought-to-be" is only another name for the sinner who has sinned and will not repent. I return, therefore, to the point from which I started. Mortal sin in some form is the root of all defection. Men may call it by other names and justify themselves on specious pretexts, but the verdict of the ages is against them. The grace of repentance is the one great need of all ought-to-be's.

What Shall it Be?

There comes a time in the lives of all careless and indifferent Catholics when they must honestly ask themselves the question: What shall it be? Light and peace or doubt and darkness; faith and practice or impiety and unbelief? There comes a time when the choice must be made. Sometimes, alas, it comes with the coming of the Savior, like a thief in the night. Sometimes it comes as God's last call to repentance. Sometimes it comes out of the abundance of His mercy in response to the prayers of sainted men and women. But come it will, and then the choice must be made, and made, perhaps, forever.

What shall it be? Ask yourself the question, dear reader, if you be a careless Catholic, and answer it before it be too late. Remember, too, that prayer is the first step in the prodigal's return. There is always hope so long as the knee is bent in prayer.

CHAPTER II.

The Cause of Causes.

The Parent Sin.

Missing Mass on Sundays is the parent sin. It is the cause of causes when there is a question of defection. Human respect, scandal, bad literature and evil associations have slain their thousands; Mass missing has slain its tens of thousands. The Church has no anxiety about sinners who hear Mass on Sundays; it distrusts the sanctity of every man and woman who holds that duty lightly.

The reasons are plain. The Mass-misser deliberately cuts himself off from the very things which go to keep him faithful. Everything in and around the church reminds him of what he is and what he ought to be. Were it only the nearness, the divine tenderness and the unspeakable goodness of the Lamb of God in the Eucharistic mystery—that would be more than enough. The mute appeal of the Real Presence, with its pathos and feebleness, is never lost upon the soul so long as a single particle of faith remains. Add to this the association of the church, with all that is holiest and best in childhood and youth, the remembrance of the vows and pledges of maturer years, as well as the memories of graces resisted and opportunities wasted. Add to all this again a species of priestly participa-

tion in the divine ceremony of the Mass, the great sacrifice, in which the victim lays aside the outward vesture of the divinity, in order that mankind, in union with Him, may have a worship worthy of God. And this is not all. The Mass-misser cuts himself off from the Living Word imparted in the sermons and instructions of the priest. This is almost as necessary for his preservance as divine grace itself. Man is so constituted that he needs to be frequently reminded of the truth of salvation. Forgetfulness as well as ignorance begets impiety.

Many who were born and brought up Catholics are now lost to the Church, because of their having been placed in circumstances that rendered difficult the fulfillment of the obligation of hearing Mass; but many more were lost because of their failure to realize its gravity. Any priest of experience will tell you that there are two classes of Catholics to whose future he looks forward with much anxiety. One is the offspring of careless parents, the other is the Mass-misser.

A World's Wonder.

Sunday observance among Catholics astonishes and edifies the world of our day. Empty churches is the problem of the hour amongst non-Catholics. Without any attempt at sensationalism or the modern methods of pious advertising, the Mass continues to fill our churches. Outsiders, not understanding the Mass, cannot understand why this should be so. Some call it superstition, and let it go at that. Others look deeper, but deem the doctrine enshrined in the Mass

too incredible for human belief. To all believers, however, the Mass-misser is an object of scandal. His negligence is ever to their minds an evidence of disbelief. No man, they rightly argue, can believe in so wonderful a doctrine and act as he does; and hence it is that scarcely any one can culpably omit hearing Mass on Sunday without giving grave scandal, whether it be to the members of his own household or to others within and without the fold who are witnesses of his example.

One of the greatest victories the Devil ever achieved in the world was when he deprived poor heretics of the Holy Sacrifice. Catholics of the above class relieve the Devil of much anxiety in their regard. He looks upon them in the same light as he does upon those who are not devout to the Blessed Virgin. They offer excellent material for future heretics.

Largely Pretexts.

There are circumstances which render the fulfillment of this obligation physically impossible, or so difficult as to be considered morally so. Physical inability, a grave or urgent necessity, the duties of one's office and the claims of just obedience are universally regarded as exempting causes. There is little need of going more fully into this matter. The legislation of the Church is applied common sense, and never demands the unreasonable or the impossible. The excuses of the Mass missers, however, are frequently pretexts. It is hot or it is cold; it is wet or it is dry. The heat prostrates them, the cold benumbs them, the

rain dampens their ardor and the snows of winter chill their fervor. There are children to take care of and household duties to perform. There are excursions for pleasure and business trips for profit. There is physical indisposition, which unfits for duty but never interferes with pleasure. There is sloth, which is dignified with the name of rest, and greed, which is dignified with the name of necessity. There are Saturday night revels and Sunday amusements which are frequently far from being innocent, but they are all sufficient to serve as pretexts for the careless and negligent.

There is the old excuse, too, that the church is afar off, even though the same distance be regarded as of little consequence when it is a question of pleasure or profit. It is a grievous matter when it is a question of saving one's immortal soul.

The Prodigal's Return.

The campaign to reclaim the ought-to-be's must begin right here. Get them to go to church on Sunday and the rest is easy. They must return along the same road by which they left. Here and there a conversion is miraculously made, but ordinarily the process resembles that by which the sinner fell from grace.

The Mass is the sun and centre of Catholic faith and Catholic life. Men cannot draw close to its mysteries without renewing their allegiance to Him who is the victim and the high priest of the sacrifice.

CHAPTER III.

The Lost Soul.

Letters of a Lost Soul.

I have in my possession copies of three letters that were given by the late Abbe Hogan to a Boston priest, now also deceased. Those letters stand in a class all by themselves. I have never seen anything like them in ancient or modern literature. I have labeled them, though I hope incorrectly, "Letters of a Lost Soul."

It appears that the abbe and the writer of those letters had been students together in the old Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, and had received the tonsure together. Shortly afterwards the young Levite fell heir to a large fortune, left to him by an uncle in Peru. He almost immediately decided that he had no vocation to a clerical life, and so left the seminary for South America, where his newly-acquired possessions were. For several years afterwards he kept up a correspondence with his old college chum, but in the course of time their letters grew less frequent and finally ceased altogether. In the meantime the young abbe had risen to a position of eminence among the fathers of Saint-Sulpice, and was at this time, if I remember rigthly, the president of the world-famous seminary in Paris of that name. According to the letters, a period of some thirty years must have elapsed from the time

of their separation, and the wanderer, returning to the great city, discovers that his old friend is still alive and is doing the Master's work faithfully and well. He goes to hear him preach, and comes away with the impression that he is still the earnest and zealous Levite of the olden days. He himself has nothing left but the remnant of a ruined and dissipated life. His body is a prey to disease, and, at the best, only a few months of life remain. He has come to Paris to be there when the curtain closes, and, sitting at the window of his room, he is listening, as he writes the first letter, to the bells of Christmas Eve. The time and the occasion are propitious.

The Diabolical Spirit.

He looks out from his window upon the little children dressed in white hastening to take part in some childish drama bearing upon the great Nativity. He hates the children, he tells the abbe as he writes. They bring back to him the memory of the days when, he too, was an innocent child, and the remembrance of how far he has wandered from the ways of rigtheousness fills his bosom with a diabolical hatred for the innocence and purity of all children. He cannot help remembering, in spite of himself, and as he writes a great day in his young life comes up before him. It is the day on which, kneeling by the side of his young friend, he pronounces the words of the sacred tonsure, "Thou art the portion of my inheritance and my cup. Thou it is who wilt restore my inheritance to me." Since that day he has wandered far from

God. With every means at his disposal for the gratification of his passions, he has sought for happiness in sinful pleasure, and with the usual result. The happiness which he has found has been of the counterfeit variety. It has left him a physical and moral wreck, and his wasted life, as he looks back upon it, seems to be filled with bitterness and vain regret.

The Pride of Lucifer.

He will not, however, as he says, "fling the dregs of a wasted life in God's face." He will have none of "the death-bed repentance." He has run his course in open defiance of God and His commandments, and he will die as he has lived. He has, by his own acts, unfitted his soul to dwell with the saints in light, and so he is ready to dwell with the spirits of darkness for ever and ever. Such is the purport of the first letter. The second goes more fully into detail as to his life. The third and last was written on the eve of his death by his own hand. In none of them did he give the venerable abbe a single clue which might enable him to seek him out and save him. When he found physical pain unbearable he snapped the thread of life and went to meet his God, as he himself said, "without a cry of repentance on his lips."

An Argument for Hell.

There is a remarkable passage in one of those letters. It is this: "I believe in hell. If there be a God at all, there must be a hell. The good and the

evil cannot dwell together in peace in this life; they must be separated in the next. If this soul of mine be immortal, and I believe it is, a future life among the virtuous and the good would be a species of punishment. I have dwelt so long among the depraved and the wicked and the ungodly that the company of the saints would be intolerable. I feel that life is a process of evolution, and from that evolution flows the retributive justice." "As ye sow so shall ye reap." The closing words of the last letter are full of pathos: "Adieu, my friend. Our boyhood's friendship was sweet and pleasant to me. My example may help to strengthen you in your conflict. I do not mean to grieve you, and I am not wanting in courage. Adieu."

A Doubt.

It seems incredible that such letters should have been written by one who appears to have retained a species of faith down to the very last, and yet such cases are not unusual. Those who give themselves up entirely to the lusts and pleasure of the world seem to acquire a species of diabolical spirit, in which pride shuts them out forever from repentance. They appear to forestall the condemnation of the immediate judgment and to judge themselves with justice. It is one of the most terrible forms which impiety can assume, and one which ought to make every "ought-to-be" stop and think. God grant, however, that the author of those letters belied his own prediction, and in his last moments raised his eyes and heart to the throne of mercy. I feel, somehow, that the prayers of the good

priest now dead must have prevailed in the end over the arch-enemy of souls.

One thought strikes me in closing. How strange it is that sinners will believe the Devil, the father of lies, when he whispers into their hearts, "There is no use; it is too late; your sins are too great for forgiveness;" and that they will not believe the God of Truth when He assures them that His mercy and forgiveness pursue them, even unto the end!

CHAPTER IV.

A Fatal Defect.

A Strange Story.

There is a strange story told in the life of a famous French priest known as Father Bernard, "the priest of the poor." He lived in Paris in the early part of the eighteenth century, and was the contemporary and friend of the famous Father Olier, founder of the Priests of Saint-Sulpice.

In his early days he had been a prodigal of the most pronounced type. He had given up not only his faith, but he had conceived such a hatred of Christianity that he undertook a journey to Turkey, in order to offer his services to the Sultan in the wars which were being waged against the Christian powers. The journey overland was in those days beset with many dangers. On one occasion he was captured by a robber

band, who, after stripping him of all that he had, decided to murder him and hide his body. In this extremity he appealed to Mary, the mother of God, and vowed that if she should deliver him from his present peril he would return to his country and do penance for his misspent life. The robbers suddenly and unexpectedly changed their minds and rode away, leaving him unharmed.

With the disappearance of danger, all desire to fulfill his vow also disappeared. He continued on his journey, entered the Turkish army and fought against the Christians in many battles. One night he had a dream or vision. He thought he heard Satan demanding his soul of God. The fallen spirit reminded God that He had condemned him and numerous other spirits to hell because of one sin, whilst He continued to let this monster of iniquity live, in spite of his manifold offenses, and all because, in order to save his miserable life, he had made a vow to Mary which he had never kept. He demanded the soul of this great sinner without further delay, and reproached Him for having permitted the Immaculate Mother to interfere, not only then, but time after time, with the workings of His divine justice.

The vision or dream made so vivid an impression upon him that he immediately resigned his position and returned to France, where he set about preparing himself for the priesthood. The balance of his life was one of rigid penance and unexampled zeal for the conversion of sinners.

A Weak Spot.

This little story illustrates what I am about to say. There seems to be a special Providence over the clients of Mary, a something which keeps them steadfast to the faith when others similarly situated become castaways. They may grow remiss in their duties for a time; they may even give up the practice of their religion for years, but sooner or later they turn to the path of duty. I have never known any one who had confidence in Mary's power to become a doubter or an unbeliever. I have known hundreds of sinners whose conversion was due entirely and wholly to the confidence which they retained in her goodness and mercy. I am not writing a sermon. I am treating simply of a matter which is eminently practical, and one which enters minutely into the conversion of all sinners. I am laying down a proposition which is supported by the opinion of great saints, and it is this: there is little hope for the conversion of a sinner who has in his heart no trace of devotion to Mary.

There are few priests exercising the sacred ministry today who cannot recall some miracle of grace as the result of a sinner's appeal to the great Mother of God. There are few, if any, who can recall a single conversion in which this element of devotion was wanting.

I go further still and assert that there are few Catholics, even amongst the intelligent and well instructed, who fully realize the all-important place which Christ has given to His Immaculate Mother in the plan of human salvation. Too many seem to regard

devotion to her in the light of some of the minor devotions of the Church. They regard it as an accidental rather than one of the great essentials of religion. They have yet to learn that what St. Paul said of heaven can be truly said of Mary. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive" how great is the power of Mary with her Divine Son.

The Saints Not Mistaken.

When I was a student of theology I used to wonder at some of the apparently extravagant assertions of St. Alphonsus Liguori and of other saints when treating of the Blessed Virgin. I have since learned, however, in the great school of a sinful world that the goodness and power of Mary is as wondrous and as extraordinary as it was in the days of the saints, and that nothing is too extravagant to be said of her when it is a question of her interest and compassion for a soul that is in danger of being eternally lost.

And O what comfort in all this for the sinner! Let no one despair of salvation so long as the great Mother of the Crucified stands ready and eager to plead our cause and to obtain for us the grace of repentance.

An old priest once told me of a curate he had who was always finding fault with what he called superstitious devotion to Mary. He wished to be very exact theologically in all his sermons, and never gave her a word of praise which even the most unfriendly critic could say did not rightfully belong to her. He was always afraid of scandalizing some Protestant who

might by accident be present in the audience. "I always felt," said the old man, "that the young man would not persevere, and he did not. There was a radical defect in his spiritual make-up, and that was the very point on which he, as a priest and a theologian, ought to have been the strongest."

The Test of Orthodoxy.

I read with considerable interest on one occasion the writings of a Bishop who had attained a considerable degree of eminence in his day and age. Those writings were largley of a philosophical character, and contained much that was admirable and commendable. Their perusal, however, left somehow a bad taste in was. There were many evidences of a deep faith in the power of the Church to enlighten and sanctify the world. There was much, too, that might have been appropriately written by a pagan philosopher. There was a something, however, about them which left a bad taste in the mouth. I tried to discover for a long time, why such was the case and finally arrived at a satisfactory solution of my difficulty. In the whole range of his writings there were scarcely a dozen half-hearted references to Mary's power. I was not surprised to discover later on that these very books had brought him under suspicion in Rome, and that because of them he had been shut out from what seemed to be a well-deserved promotion. Rome, the mother of all the churches, has ever been suspicious of the orthodoxy of those in whose writings and teachings Mary had been relegated to the background.

Much to Learn.

A priest who visited the city of Mitlan, in the southern part of Mexico, during the past year, tells of a beautiful custom which prevails there. The train which bore the priest and his fellow-passengers pulled into the city just as the first rays of the rising sun broke through the eastern horizon. What was their surprise to find the whole city singing a hymn of praise to Mary. In the olden days there had stood in the place a famous temple to the sun. The good padres who made the people Christians had evidently transformed an old pagan custom and made it an occassion of engendering devotion to Mary. The priest further relates that the whole party, Protestants included, were exceedingly edified, and pronounced this pious custom one of the most beautiful they had ever witnessed.

We have much to learn from the Catholic inhabitants of other lands. We are, I fear, in matters of devotion to Mary, the least devout of all Catholic peoples. Nowhere are her feasts less honored, her altars more neglected. The fear of offending the sensibilities of non-Catholics pervades all our public utterances. There is too much of the apologetic tone in all that concerns her honor. We are afraid to treat openly of her apparitions, or of those wondrous prodigies of Mary's power, for fear that some one who differs from us in religion will laugh at us or think us superstitious. We seem to forget that in this matter the Lord has chosen the weak things of the world that He might confound the strong and the foolish, that

He might confound the wise. The Catholic Church teaches, and teaches authoritatively, that, in the Providence of God, true devotion to Mary is frequently the secret of Christian perseverance. It holds up constantly before the sinner's eyes the sure promise of pardon and reconciliation if he will but turn to God through Mary, the Mother of God and refuge of sinners.

CHAPTER V.

The Great Barrier.

(Against Iniquity.)

A Cure for Doubt.

A young man came to me one day and said, "Father, I want to speak to you about some doubts which I have on matters pertaining to the Church." I said to him, "How long is it since you have been to confession?" "About three years," he replied; "but I have not been situated so that I could go when I wanted to. I have lived for more than two years of that time in a place where there was no church, so you see there is a reason for my not having gone." "When did you begin to have these doubts?" I asked again. "I have been having them for quite a while," he answered, "and as I associate with men who scarcely believe in anything, I am anxious to have them solved; first, for my own satisfaction and secondly, so that I can defend our doctrine when it is attacked."

"All right," I said; "but first I want you to do one thing. Go out there to the church and get ready for confession. When you have done that, come to me and I will solve every doubt. If you are unwilling to do this, I have good reason to believe that the time spent on you will be time spent in vain."

When that young man had finished his confession every doubt had disappeared. He was the simple, humble, earnest Catholic once again. Faith had resumed its sway. His own heart and conscience bore testimony to the truth of those things which made for righteousness and inward peace.

What is true of this young man is true of nearly all those who have grown indifferent. One good, honest earnest confession will dispel all the clouds of error that bedim the intellect and obscure the light of faith. Religious indifference is a spiritual disease. Its root is mortal sin. Its remedy is the great sacrament, which attacks sin in its stronghold and eradicates it, root and branch. That sacrament is confession, or penance.

Something Wrong.

When Catholics give up confession, the beginning of the end has come. There is only one reason. They will not give up sin. They may call their negligence by other names. They may give this and that excuse, but deep down in their hearts they know well that there is something which God or His Church demands, and which they are unwilling to do.

I am not treating here of the ignorant or of the badly instructed. It sometimes happens that such people do not fulfill their religious obligations for the simple reason that they do not know them. There are few, however, who do not know what the confessional means. It has been the "stone of destiny," the dogma around which controversy has waged for more than three hundred years. The sects have reviled it, but they have never misunderstood it. They have always known that it stands for a wonderful power claimed by priests—God's own power of absolving from sin. So well is this power understood amongst Catholics that it is almost the first lesson which a child learns. It is a matter in which ignorance is almost inconceivable. When it is avoided it is because the first and principal condition upon which it insists is a change of heart and a change of life.

I know well that there are some fallen-away Catholics who will resent the imputation that they are leading sinful lives. Let us tear off the mask. There is,undoubtedly, something wrong. The experience of the age has proven beyond the peradventure of a doubt that good men and women do fall away. If they have come to a stage where they do not believe there is anything wrong, their case is sad indeed. It is a sign that they have already made a creed to fit their conduct and that, according to the tenets of that new creed, they stand acquitted before the tribunals set up in their own consciences. At least that is what they make themselves believe. Sometimes an illuminating ray of God's grace sends a thrill of wild fear through the soul's darkness, and then they do not

feel wholly secure. As a rule, however, such illuminations only serve to add to the account of graces resisted and mercies contemptuously cast aside.

Mercy's Prodigality.

If we be lost, God will certainly not be to blame. He has done all that He could to save us and leave us intelligence and a free will. He might have made us automatons or creatures of pure instinct, and fitted us to work out a destiny along such lines. He has given us brains and understanding and made us free. If we have sinned, He only asks that we repent and do penance. He has set up a tribunal of mercy in every corner of the earth, and given to men like ourselves His divine power of forgiveness. He has been so prodigal of His mercy that none, not even the vilest of sinners, are excluded from its benefits. There are no bounds and no limits set to that forgiving power. All He asks is that they confess their iniquities and resolve to go and sin no more. What could God do that He has not done? What answer can we make to Him on the last day if we have persistently refused His proffered mercy and died impenitent?

A Human Need.

The sin and spiritual misery of the world has sore need of such an institution as the Catholic confessional. The bruised and broken spirit needs the assurance of divine forgiveness. It needs at the same time the spoken word of human sympathy. Confes-

sion of sin is as much an instinct of the human heart as is the hope of immortality.

I have often thought that if the confessional were only a human institution, it would be of incalculable benefit to the world. It teaches men and women to examine and see for themselves where they stand with God. It teaches, moreover, the importance of correcting the mistakes of the past and the necessity of frequently renewing one's good resolutions. Amendment of life is the keynote of it all. Without this confession is a mockery. The bare confession of sin may be truly said to be the least important of its requisites. There may be a valid confession without even so much as a spoken word, as in the case of the unconscious. There can never be a valid absolution where there is no real sorrow, and real sorrow implies ever and always the firm purpose of amendment.

The great argument for the divine character of the confessional is its fruits. It is the greatest power for righteousness in the world to-day. No other single moral force can be compared with it for an instant. Abolish it and a great tide of immorality would sweep across the world. It stands for God and His commandments. It stands for everything that is holiest and best in life—for all the high ideals of our holy faith. It is the great barrier set up by Christ against the unrighteousness of the world, the barrier which sets the limits and bounds to human passion and proclaims to the flood-tide of human iniquity, "Thus far shall thou go, and no farther."

CHAPTER VI.

Shifting the Burden.

An Old Subterfuge.

A good lady writes from the East to inform me that she does not believe that I have yet discovered the true secret of the "Ought-to-Be's." She intimates very plainly that the scandal given by priests is largely to blame for such a condition. She takes advantage of the opportunity at the same time to criticize my attitude toward the erring in some of my articles, and hopes that a larger measure of charity will characterize my future utterances.

With regard to the latter charge, I will only say that the best I can hope for is that here and there my words may help some poor soul who is staggering under the load, or one who has already been crushed to the earth by its weight. I am well aware that not all, perhaps not even half, the readers of the Catholic Standard and Times will read these articles. I am hopeful, however, that Almighty God may be pleased to employ them to infuse new courage into some sinking heart, or make them the means of enlightening some who sit in the darkness and shadow of death. A priest preaches to a larger audience through the press than in any other way, and the duty of preaching the Gospel is incumbent upon every priest.

Sinners and Sinners.

With regard to the first charge, I will say that I have heard it before, and I have heard it most frequently from men and women for whom I have very little respect. There are sinners and sinners. There are those who have manhood enough in them to shoulder their own sins, and those who are always striving to shift the burden on to some one else's shoulders. For the first I have nothing but sympathy and compassion. I am one of them, and their infirmity is mine. For the second my feelings are somewhat mixed. There is something unmanly and unfair in their attitude. They know well, or ought to know, that God will not ask them on the day of reckoning what this or that man or woman has done, but that he will judge them according to their own works. It is more than likely that Ananias found an excuse for his conduct in the avarice of Judas and the lies of Peter, but these did not save him from the wrath of God.

Yes, I know well that priests ought to be pillars of light, and so ought all Christians. There is not one gospel for the clergy and another for the laity. They are all bound to strive after perfection, and none will be excused. More is expected of the priest, but that is a reflection upon, rather than a compliment to, the lay-man.

I have always found this class of shifters hard to deal with. There is a something wrong in their make-up, a defect in the fundamental principles of conduct, a flaw in the natural foundation upon which the supernatural

structure must be built. It is the old subterfuge of Adam in the first great sin of the world, and age and custom have not made it respectable or removed from it the original taint of cowardice.

Bad priests and bad ministers of religion are the favorite arguments of professional unbelievers the world over. It seems to give those people a good deal of comfort to know that here and there a minister of the Gospel gets down to their own level. They are welcome to all the comfort they or any one else can derive from such an argument.

Misleading Aphorisms.

There are a good many exploded platitudes handed down from the olden days—bogies employed originally to scare young people, which in the course of years have come to be regarded as accepted truths, and one of these is that "priests should lead better lives than the people." All Christians, priests included, should be saints, and ordinarily it is easier for a layman to be a saint than it is for a priest. The layman has only his own soul to answer for, whilst the priest has to answer for his own soul as well as for the souls of those committed to his care. This doubtful principle has led many men and women who ought to know better to make the shortcomings of priests and religious an excuse for their own personal depravity.

It is true, nevertheless, that the most difficult ideal in the world is that which is held up before the eyes of the priest. His ordinary conduct, his daily life frequently calls for the practice of heroic virtue. When

he faints and falters by the way, under the heavy cross which the Church has laid upon him in making him a priest, what does he find? He finds the swine of the earth, wallowing in the gutters and in the mire, lifting their heads from the slough which surrounds them to grunt their contempt and lay the responsibility for their condition on his already overburdened shoulders. There is pity in plenty for the common sinner, but there is no pity for the poor, fallen priest, whose condition is most deserving of pity. He is an Ishmaelite, an outcast, and no hand is stretched forth to help and comfort him in his hour of need. His fall is merely another reason, providentially supplied, why the ordinary sinner should not turn from his evil ways to serve the Lord, his God. It is only another illustration of that strange logic which declares that when a priest chooses hell for his portion others must follow him into the eternal fires.

An Explanation.

I do not mean to imply in the foregoing that priests are not called upon to strive after holiness and righteousness with all their might. Every priest well understands the holiness of the priestly state and the exacting character of its requirements. He has had this drummed into his ears ever since he can remember anything. He knows he must lead a holy and a blameless life in order to do God's work worthily in the world. He realizes, better perhaps than any one else, the importance of good example as far as he is concerned, and no one regrets it more than he when he

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falls short of the true priestly ideal. All this, however, has nothing to do with the question in hand. Popes, Bishops and priests in the past have fallen from grace. That will not excuse me for a failure to live up to the standard set up by Christ.

Priests will have to answer personally for their imperfections. Every man who has come into the world must stand and answer for himself before the great judgment seat. By his own deeds shall he earn approval or condemnation.

CHAPTER VII.

The Sham Fortress.

The Suicide Club.

I have often wondered if all who have given up the faith be as unhappy as those with whom I have personally come in contact. I have met many of them, and I have never met a happy man or woman amongst them. The first sick call I ever had was to a young woman who had shot herself whilst lying by the side of her husband, who was a divorced man at the time of their marriage. The poor girl had evidently not found the happiness for which she had sacrificed faith and conscience.

There is in many parts of the United States a Bohemian secret society composed chiefly of renegade Catholics. The spirit of this society is aggressively atheistic and anti-Catholic. Wherever it exists it has manifested a characteristic which has attracted general

attention. A large percentage of the members die by their own hand. It is commonly called "The Bohemian Suicide Club."

I have noticed that there is a vast difference between the fallen-away Catholics of the different nationalities. Bohemian perverts are, as a rule, very bitter in their antagonism. This is accounted for, largely by the fact that infidel newspapers have a wide circulation amongst such people. As a rule the priests of this nationality frequently find their tasks a very difficult one. The majority of their countrymen are faithful and devoted to their religion, but there is an active minority, at least in the West, which is animated by what appears to be a diabolical spirit. Germans and Irish of Catholic extraction always retain a warm place in their hearts for the old Church long after they have ceased to practice its precepts.

I remember with much pleasure an experience I had some years ago with a small colony of German "ought-to-be's" in Central Nebraska. When I first began attending them there appeared to be only about a half-dozen families, and these not very devout. In the face of many difficulties a little church was built, and shortly afterwards a zealous young Dominican gave the first mission ever held in the place. The result far exceeded our expectations. On the last day of the mission some twenty men approached Holy Communion, and it was publicly known that not one of them had been to confession since the day in which they had settled in the place, some twenty years before. When I turned the little congregation over to its newly-appointed pastor, shortly afterwards, the mem-

bership had increased to forty-nine families. Since that time much has been done in a spiritual way amongst them. They are loyal and steadfast, and a striking proof of the assertion that American "ought-to-be's" furnish the greatest field for missionary effort in the whole wide world.

And this brings me to another point to which I believe it is well to frequently call the reader's attention. It is this: We must never give up the hope of converting such people. I make one exception. It is that of open apostasy. Outside of such there is always a ground for hope so long as a single particle of faith remains. These people are not happy in their indifference. There is no peace of heart in irreligion, and God's grace sometimes operates in wondrous ways. Some of the warmest and best friends I have ever had have been fallen-away Catholics. I have found many of them generous and ready with their aid and sympathy when I stood in need of the same. In this respect they frequently put apparently pious people to shame. Piety and parsimony sometimes go hand in hand.

Such people come back sooner or later unless they are visited with a strange retributive punishment of the "ought-to-be's"—a sudden death. And have you ever noticed the prevalence of sudden deaths amongst them? It seems to be a punishment for the scandal of which their lives have been the occasion and a lesson as to the uncertainty of a death-bed repentance.

The Pulpit of the Future.

A matter which plays an important part in the bringing about of such conditions is one which we are very liable to overlook. It is the absence of Catholic literature in Catholic homes. In taking the census there is one question which ought never to be omitted. That is a question bearing upon the presence or absence of Catholic newspapers and periodicals in the home. This is a matter of the most primary importance. It affords a sure index as to the quality of the faith to be found there.

We live in an age when literature plays an all-important part in the moulding of public and private opinion. Bad literature has been and is one of the greatest influences for evil in the world. Voltaire in his day almost laughed Christianity out of France. The defenders of the Church, strong in their fancied security, received many of his attacks with contemptuous silence. It was a silence fraught with fateful consequences for religion and civilization. It demonstrated to a certainty that henceforth the Church in every country must use the press as well as the pulpit for the dissemination of truth. And here let me state what I believe to be a well-established truth, and one which is, I fear, too frequently overlooked. The place of the pulpit in the dissemination of truth will become less and less important as the years go by. The press is the great pulpit of the world, and will become more and more so as time advances. Through it accordingly must the future preacher impart to souls

much of the message which has been committed to his keeping.

A Catholic home destitute of Catholic literature in this day and age is an anomaly. It is worse. It is a fortress of the faith destitute of weapons of defense and open on all sides to the attacks of the enemy.

Unbelief's Propaganda.

I was sitting in front of a hotel at Denver one evening several years ago when my attention and the attention of those present was suddenly attracted by the noise of shooting in the immediate vicinity. It was a saloon brawl, conducted in the typical Western way and when it was over a young man lay breathing his last. I pushed my way through the curious crowd to his side, in the hope that I might be of some service to a dying man. He was unconscious, with blood pouring from several bullet wounds in his body. I administered conditional absolution, and in the presence of the police, who were already on the grounds, I searched his pockets for some marks of identification. In those pockets I found some envelopes bearing his name, a number of indecent photographs and a lecture of Robert Ingersoll's, entitled "The Mistakes of Moses." That lecture of Ingersoll's told the whole story. We could picture the rest for ourselves. In the wreck of that young man's life could be plainly read drunkenness, debauchery and unbelief, the great trinity of the generation of young men who look up to Ingersoll as their leader and their guide.

I do not believe that we Catholic people fully realize the widespread apostolate of agnostic and atheistic literature. Ingersoll's works are as popular to-day as they were in the heyday of that great agnostic's fame. His specious reasonings and highsounding platitudes constitute the watchwords of thousands of our countrymen, who have turned from counterfeit Christianity to the more seductive doctrines of materialism and modern paganism. The result is only another proof of the evil influence of bad literature. The apostles of unbelief have labored whilst the sentinels on the watch towers of truth have slept.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ingersoll's Straw God.

The Apostle of a Liberal Creed.

Ingersoll has been for many years the great high priest of what is known as "the big church of America." The big church comprises a great many classes and conditions of religious belief. It stands for the broadest liberality in matters of faith and practice. It bars no one. In it every man is free to believe as he pleases, and refusal to believe the tenets of any or of all creeds entails no taint of heresy. The attitude of its members towards religion in general cannot be said to be an unkindly one. It is one of pity rather than one of blame—pity for people who in this day and age accept dogmas and doctrines and principles of conduct in lieu of empty platitudes and glittering generalities,

and a latitude in matters of morals which brooks no restrictions save such as are imposed upon all men alike by the laws and ordinances of the States and communities in which they live.

In the big church every man is his own Pope, and personal infallibility is the rule rather than the exception. Prayer has no place in this new dispensation. Its God is an impotent and indifferent being, whose attitude toward man is well expressed by Omar Khayam:

And that inverted bowl we call the sky,
Where under crawling, cooped, we live and die,
Look not to it for help, for it,
As impotently moves as you and I.

Here examination of conscience is a lost art. With the dread of a future judgment eliminated, there is no need that men should judge themselves. Evil passions are merely nature's laws, and vice and crime the abnormal outgrowth of the race's evolution from primitive savagery to that more or less indefinite stage of perfection which will come to pass when all the creeds of the world shall have been set aside and reason alone shall reign supreme.

Somewhat Skeptical.

This is, in substance, the Ingersollian creed, and insomuch as it represents the final stage of many "ought-to-be's," it is a subject deserving of serious treatment. Of it I think it can be truly said that it is not to-day, and never has been, the creed of the best and noblest amongst the children of men. It is not

the creed of the pure of heart, the simple and the upright of life. The age, thank God, still retains an old-fashioned regard for men and women of conscience. It persists in looking for the truly great of the world amongst those who humbly "sacrifice" their reason on the altar of faith. We seldom or ever hear of those pseudo-apostles being held up to the admiration and imitation of posterity. When men speak of them, it is to point a moral rather than to offer them as examples for the imitation of others. Ingersoll was one of the greatest and best of them, but I do not believe that his admirers and disciples will ever demand that his name be placed in the Hall of Fame. He trucked his doctrines in the market for wealth and power, but we seek in vain in his life for that steadfast devotion to the cause of truth and practical benevolence towards his fellow-men, which, in a world which looks for deeds, not words, will ever be the test of human greatness.

The Church is not a ghoul that fastens itself upon the dead bodies of its enemies to wreak upon their cold and pulseless clay a futile and ignoble vengeance. It grieves rather that a brilliant intellect, such as Ingersoll was, should have been so unworthily employed. It is to it a source of deep regret that a soul which God has created for His love and for His glory should have read in the heavens that man's existence is an insoluble mystery; that his life has no higher purpose than the inorganic matter by which it is surrounded, and that all the beauty and harmony of God's creation is for him meaningless and purposeless and vain and void.

Their Straw God.

The chief trouble with all the unbelievers with whom I have come in personal contact, or those whose works I have read, is this: they give Almighty God credit for having less sense and less understanding than they themselves possess. They are all the same. The God which they attack is a straw God, which they build up and demolish with the utmost ease. The God against which Ingersoll raged and stormed for years is nothing more or less than an imaginary eternal infinite fiend, reveling in murder, blood, rapine and plunder, and finding a species of diabolical delight in the miseries and sufferings of the creatures which he is supposed to have created. He is the God of the cruel, the foolish, the ignorant, the murderous, the malignant, the corrupt, the avaricious, the heartless, the rapacious and the bloodthirsty of every age. In short, he is a monster of a most frightful mien, who has created man in order that his existence might be a curse rather than a blessing to creation. Jesus, the gentle Saviour, is a charlatan of the first magnitude. His deluded followers have deluged the world with blood in order that they might demonstrate His rightful claims to His great title, "the Prince of Peace." Whatever is praiseworthy in His doctrines has been stolen from the great minds of pagan antiquity. The balance has merely served to make foolish martyrs and incorrigible bigots and helped to impede rather than hasten the onward march of human progress.

The Fatal Test.

The chief difficulty which the unbeliever encounters is this: Christianity has demonstrated its ability to effect something in the world; infidelity has effected nothing. The nations which have accepted Christianity, are inmeasurably in advance of those in which unbelief obtains full sway. Infidelity of the Simon-pure, unadulterated brand, such as we find it amongst our advanced American thinkers, has demonstrated its capacity to effect—nothing. It has been at work for almost two thousand years, and all "the brave few," from Julian the Apostate down to Ingersoll, have not succeeded in regenerating even so much as one little tribe; aye, despite all its pretensions to philanthropy, benevolence and brotherly love, it has not, up to the present, suceeeded in founding even so much as one little orphan asylum. Infidelity's proudest claim is to words, not deeds. It has been and is to-day, as far as human advancement is concerned, absolutely barren of visible results.

A free Gospel never yet had a place in unbelief's propaganda. Ingersoll's gospel of brotherly love was ever hedged round with big admission fees and excessive royalties. He clothed the ancient fables of Julian and Celsus in a new and wondrous phraseology, and leveled the barbed shafts of ridicule at the weak spots of the Christian armor. But he was ever and always the preacher of a creed for revenue only, and the founder of a school whose chief claim to distinction is a confessed inability to live up to the high

standard of Christian morals. As such he well deserves to occupy the first place in the affections of the "ought-to-be's" of every creed.

CHAPTER IX.

In the Name of Learning.

Intellectual Strays.

A missionary priest of wide experience has asked me to touch upon a class of fallen-away Catholics who are a thorn in the side of the Church wherever they are found. He refers to those "intellectual strays" whose researches in the domain of science have led them to reject Christianity and, with Christianity, all that it stands for in doctrine and morals.

Those people are a very difficult class to deal with. As a rule they are proud, self-opinionated and much given to controversy. Their wisdom is so self-evident that it is impossible to escape it. They are liberal as yet, of course, and are quite willing that the Church should remain in this country, at least until such time as advanced thinkers shall decree that every form of superstition be banished from the land. They pity, rather than blame, the poor, deluded followers of religion, and particularly their former brethren, who are in a special manner deserving of commiseration. With the priests they have less patience. Men of education, such as they are, ought to know better. They keep the ignorant masses in spiritual bondage, and in this way are the greatest foes of liberty and light.

The medical profession has supplied many of the members of this class. Medicine, the most inexact of all the sciences, seems particularly averse to Christian teaching. The soul, the vital principle, is not discernible under the microscope, and successfully eludes the dissecting knife; hence it follows, as a natural consequence, that it does not exist. The doctors have not yet succeeded in fathoming half the mysteries of mind and matter of life and death, but the mystery of an immortal soul is rejected at the very outset as entirely unworthy of the consideration of raw students and amateur scientists.

One of Many.

There was, in one of my former missions, a young doctor who helped to bring this matter to my immediate attention. He was the son of worthy Catholic parents, and a good education for their boy was the dominant idea of their lives for many years. They sent him to a Catholic college, and when he had graduated therefrom they determined to make him a doctor. Although there was almost at his door an excellent medical college conducted under the auspices of the Jesuits, it was not good enough for a young man of so many brilliant parts. Nothing would do but that he must hie himself to the far East and enter a "non-sectarian" institution to fit himself for his chosen profession.

He had been an exemplary boy up to that time, and like his parents, I had looked forward with many hopes to the hour when he would complete his course and take up the practice of medicine amongst us.

Good Catholic doctors are rare, and I had always been desirous of having one of the right kind in the parish. Imagine my surprise upon finding that the young man upon whom we had all built so many hopes came forth from the Eastern institution an agnostic of the most pronounced type. And his history is the story of hundreds of our young men who have entered what are sometimes incorrectly named "the learned professions." Unbelieving professors and profligate associates have done the work. The thin veneer of so-called learning has been made a pretext for rejecting the science of sciences, the knowledge of God.

The Church has always feared ignorance. It has feared more, if possible, that half-learning in which intellectual pride so easily takes root. It challenges the whole range of science to produce a single demonstrated fact at variance with Catholic truth. It points to numberless scientific conclusions which religion has demonstrated to be false and fraudulent. It has proclaimed time and again that there is no war between science and faith—that faith is the handmaid and guide of right reason, and that without faith as a guide reason is liable to encounter a thousand hidden pitfalls. The man, who in this day and age, proclaims that learning is incompatible with faith demostrates clearly that he himself is destitute of real learning, that the science of which he boasts is of the counterfeit variety.

We have seen many of those learned perverts in our day, and we have never seen one of them whose standing in the community was to be envied. At bottom their difficulty is one of morals rather than of dogma,

and the public is not slow to recognize this fact. Their learning, like their system of morals, is sooner or later discovered to be a sham. The humblest Catholic in any community has been found by experience to be more worthy of the honor and esteem of his fellow-men than the whole generation of unbelievers, learned and otherwise, despite their boastful assumption of superiority and their freedom from the trammels of faith and conscience.

The Verdict of the Ages.

The true scientist ought to be the humblest of men. There are so many things in creation of which he is and must remain ignorant. The more he knows the more truly must he realize how much there is still to learn. He ought to be the last man in the world to attack the science which unfolds the relations between the knowable and the unknown, between man and God, between the creature and the Creator. His unbelief is nothing more nor less than the weakness and blindness of human pride. A little handful of brains sits in judgment on the infinite, and because he cannot comprehend infinitude he must, perforce, reject it. He looks down into his own soul, and because he cannot see and taste and touch and handle that spiritual and immaterial element, he denies its immortality, aye, even, when every fibre of his being, when every instinct of his heart registers its protest against such a denial.

Unbelief is the most unscientific of all the creeds. The ages have rejected it as inhuman and impossible. The existence of a Creator, the immortality of the soul,

the rewards and punishments which wait upon men's deeds—these are great truths to which the world has clung from the beginning. It will be found clinging to them long after science has climbed the topmost peaks and discovered all those things which lie within the reach of human ken.

CHAPTER X.

The Money Question.

Always Acute.

A friend writes from a large Eastern city: "I know of a couple of converts in this parish who have given up the faith largely because they heard nothing in the Church but money, money and everlastingly money."

The money question will always be an acute one, so long as the support of religion depends upon the voluntary contributions of the people. It cannot well help being so. I do not believe, however, that it is an acute question for the right kind of Catholics. It is the wrong kind—those who wish to escape the financial obligations imposed upon them—who make it so. I am well aware that this is a matter in which many people are easily scandalized. I am willing to concede, too, that in some instances this "talking money" from the pulpit has been somewhat overdone. It is patent, however, to the most limited intelligence that a certain amount of it is absolutely necessary, and no priest directly engaged in parish work can well escape it.

When I was a student of theology there was one subject which I was never permitted to forget. That was the great injury to religion this money question was causing, and the necessity of prudence and self-sacrifice in dealing with it. Our professors of theology were all theorists, and none of them had been brought into actual contact with the practical workings of a parish. They proceeded on two assumptions, both of which I have since discovered to be unfounded. One was that priests were too prone to harp upon money matters to the exclusion of other and more important subjects, and the other was that the great majority of the faithful are willing to do their full duty in matters bearing upon the financial well-being of the parish. I have found the real facts in the case to be almost the reverse. I have found a large percentage of our people to be ready and willing to enjoy the benefits of religion without making the pecuniary sacrifices which religion inevitably entails; and I have found at the same time that priests as a class abhor the duty which is forced upon them of treating money matters from the pulpit. I think, too, that it can be truly said that no class of men in the whole world care as little for money as do American priests. I have often thought that many of them, because of this indifference, are too easily imposed upon. The majority of them, to my certain knowledge, are positively poor. The salary paid them in the different dioceses of the country is not calculated to aid in piling up riches. In the

smaller parishes it is frequently not sufficient for their ordinary needs, but priestly pride and a reluctance to talk money prevent them from making their wants known. If the average priest knew beforehand the humiliations he would be forced to undergo in matters pertaining to this ever acute money question, I venture to assert that the Church of God would be sadly in need of ministers.

Cheap Christianity.

The older a priest grows the less patience he has with that class of Catholics known in the common parlance of the country as bad pays, or by the more significant and more opprobious title "dead beats." They are, as a rule, the most censorious and the most exacting. They are the first to insist that everything in connection with the church be kept in the best possible shape; that it be well lighted, heated and ventilated, and that it be an eminently respectable place of worship. They insist, at the same time, that a priest be a gentleman, a scholar and a saint, and especially the latter, for saints have acquired a reputation for living on meagre annual allowances. It is this more or less intangible element known as "gall" which confronts the priest at every step in his dealings with this common brand of cheap Christianity, and which makes him lose patience and occasionally give public utterance to unpalatable truths.

All that the Church asks and expects is that people contribute according to their means; no more, no less. Yet if it ever becomes a question between the soul of a penurious person and his money, she solemnly adjures him to keep his money and save his soul, i. e., if such a soul can be saved, which is, to say the least, very doubtful.

No Place for Avarice.

I do not wish to be understood as condoning abuses and apologizing for pious grafts or pious grafters. So long as priests are clothed with human frailty, so long will abuses exist amongst them. If eleven out of every twelve be faithful, they will be doing as well as the apostles did and a great deal better than the average run of Christians. Amongst priests themselves there is a deep and traditional contempt for the priest in whose soul the vice of avarice has taken root. It savors too much of the treason of the faithless apostle, and is wholly incompatible with the high ideals of the clerical state. Cardinal Manning says somewhere that a priest's will without charity is the saddest testimony as to the character of his life. A priest without charity and consideration for the poor is an anomaly. Thanks be to God he is so rare that the species may be said to be practically extinct.

It is not the poor, however, who are the bad pays. It is the well-to-do, and sometimes the wealthy. The

poor have always done their share and more than their share in this country. It is to them that much of the credit must be given for the material progress which the Church has made.

Once on a time the Anglicans of Dublin assembled to formulate plans for the erection of a great national cathedral, and after many plans had been proposed and rejected, chiefly because those present were unwilling to go down deep enough into their own pockets, Dean Swift arose and, with a fine sarcasm, suggested that they let the Papists build it with their pennies and then confiscate it. The great dean merely gave expression to a striking historical truth. In the past, as in the present, it is the pennies of the poor rather than the pounds of the rich upon which the Church has had to rely.

The priest's solicitude in financial matters is generally not for himself. It is for the Church with which he has been entrusted. Its interests are his interests; its failure will, many times unjustly, be laid upon his shoulders. His standing in the eyes of his Bishop and fellow-priests is frequently affected by the financial standing of his parish, and while his whole nature may revolt against the unpleasant duty of forcing his people to recognize the most elementary business principles in their Church relations, his duty to God and to himself urges him to this unpleasant task.

CHAPTER XI.

A Hackneyed Subject.

The Devil's Favorite Lure.

John Boyle O'Reilly has written an instructive little poem, which runs as follows:

"What bait do you use," said a saint to the Devil.
"When you fish where the souls of men abound?"
"Well, for special cases," said the King of Evil,
"Gold and fame are the best I've found."
"But for common use?" quoth the saint.
"Ah, then," said the Demon, "I fish for man, not men,
"And a thing I hate
"Is to change my bait,
"So I fish with a woman the whole year round."

The man or the woman has ever been a most effective lure of the Evil One in drawing souls away from virtue. The Church has always discouraged what is known as "mixed marriages." It has had the very best of reasons. They have drawn more souls away from God than they have ever drawn towards Him. There are those who hold that if it were not for mixed marriages America would be to-day more than half Catholic. I do not know how much probability there is in that hypothesis, but I think I am correct in stating that such unions have done an irreparable amount of harm to religion in every State in the Union.

This has been brought to my mind in a particular manner during a mission which has just closed in the

church of which I have charge. At the close of that mission I made a partial census of the men and women who had not approached the sacraments. The neglect in almost every case could be traced to one cause—a mixed marriage. And what is true of this parish is true of every parish in the land. You will find the great bulk of the ought-to-be's amongst those who have married a non-Catholic husband or wife.

O, yes, there are good men and women who have contracted mixed marriages. It is not of these I am treating. It is the bad ones—those who have permitted themselves to grow cold and careless in the service of the Lord, who have, to all intents and purposes, given up the faith as one of the conditions of domestic peace.

I do not think it necessary to enumerate here the broad principles which lie at the root of the Church's disapproval of such marriages. Its present attitude is the result of bitter experience. Young men and women when under the influence of the tender passion will make all kinds of promises. The majority of those promises are never kept. Priests and Bishops are accused of intolerance and a lack of liberality because they are so strict in this matter. The real truth of the case is that they have not been strict enough.

The Principle at Stake.

After almost twenty centuries of chastening experience, the Church stands out boldly and squarely in its opposition to mixed marriages. It has found that it is impossible or nearly so for two people whose

moral standards are totally at variance to dwell together in peace. And this is as true today as it was in the days of Nero and Vespasion. Married life has problems enough of its own without adding the dissensions arising from different religious beliefs. There are higher considerations, however, than the family peace. Such unions have been the frequent source of apostasy and irreligion. The children are brought up non-Catholics or without any religion. They are undesirable from the moral point of view. A Catholic wife linked to a Protestant or unbelieving husband has, as such wives too well know, abundant opportunity to sacrifice Catholic principles of conduct. She cannot be true to her religious convictions and at the same time be the ideal wife of a husband, who sneers at many things which she holds sacred. It was a mistake and frequently worse than a mistake a generation ago. With the commonly accepted views on the question of maternity which are everywhere prevalent amongst non-Catholics it is today a moral calamity. This is a hard saying but it is the simple truth. Catholic and non-Catholic morality on matters affecting the marriage relations are as opposite as the poles. There is little prospect for happiness in a union, in which the Catholic party is exposed to the danger of living in a chronic state of mortal sin.

An Old Theme.

The problem of marriage and divorce has now reached the critical stage in this country. Were it not for the uncompromising attitude of the Catholic

Church, a floodtide of iniquity would sweep over the land, carrying everything before it.

"This is a hackneyed subject," I hear some one say. Yes, it is an old theme; but it is a theme of which a priest may well treat on bended knees and with a prayerful heart, for it is brought home to him every day in a hundred different ways. He finds the marriage problem to be as acute today in every parish as it was in the days when God sent His destroying waters upon the earth because "the sons of God went into the daughters of men and brought forth children."

Ingersoll in several of his lectures makes the wholesale destruction of the Madianites, as narrated in the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers, a strong argument in support of his contention as to the cruelty of Jehovah. It is one of the strongest arguments against the Christian's God to be found in the whole range of this great unbeliever's writings. On the face of it, the occurrence, as narrated by the inspired author of the Pentateuch, is nothing more or less than a wanton massacre of defenseless women and innocent children. Herodotus, a Pagan himself, has supplied us with the best solution of Ingersoll's objection. He was the greatest traveler of pre-Christian times, and he has left us an interesting account of the manners and morals of the gentile races with whom he came in contact. One thing stands clearly out in his narrative, and that is the unspeakable depravity of all those Pagan peoples. It is almost incredible that human beings could have sunk so low in the moral scale. There is little wonder, therefore, that Moses should have commanded his followers to wipe the

corrupt Madianites off the face of the earth. Their wanton women had led the chosen people into sin by enticing them to take part in the impure ceremonies of their idolatrous worship, and Moses, by the command of God, determined to root out the evil by destroying a people who were unfit to live and perpetuate the human species. That thirty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers is the greatest sermon on mixed marriages ever written. It is an evidence that the great law-giver recognized the danger of union between the believer and the unbeliever, and took a most effective means of preventing the same.

The Nation's Menace.

We have always had those amongst our own people who are wiser than the Church itself. To them the Church's legislation is antiquated and out of date. It will not permit people to marry whom they will and when they will. In other words it is merely striving to save them from the consequences of their own lack of wisdom and experience.

We live in an age when laxity of views on matters pertaining to marriage has become the nation's menace. Divorce is becoming more and more brazen. It has pushed itself into the Protestant pew and pulpit despite the protestations of the best men and women in all the denominations. It has come to a stage, when it claims equality with lawful wedlock. Is it to be wondered at that in such conditions, the Church should strive by every means in its power to impress upon its people the sanctity and holiness of the married state

and should at the same time point out to the young and inexperienced the dangers from hasty and ill-considered unions. Marry in haste and repent at leisure is an axiom as old as the race. The Church has found the solution of the marriage problem exceptionally difficult in every age, and every country. In a country where divorce is so fearfully prevalent and where there is so little regard for the solemn obligations and duties of the married state, mixed marriages are to say the least extremely undesirable. The fewer we have of them the better for the cause of religion in the years to come.

CHAPTER XII.

The American Girl.

A Risky Proceeding.

It is generally considered a pretty hazardous undertaking for bishops and priests to lay down rules and regulations for the "American girl." In doing so they are, to say the least, treading on dangerous ground. Her pluck and independence are proverbial. She is the incarnation of all those qualities of which poets have sung and to utter one word in disparagement of her charms or to attempt to thwart her in the exercise of her heaven-given rights is treason of the rankest kind. She is a queen in her own realm and there is no one to dispute her title. Have not our orators, our editors, our public speakers and our statesmen lauded her to the skies and set her up in a position all by

herself? It behooves us, therefore, to proceed very cautiously when it is a question of setting limits or bounds to her freedom of action.

When she falls in love, nowadays, parents are expected to acquiesce in her choice as a matter of course. It really matters but little as far as ultimate results are concerned. It is simply a question of good taste on the part of the parents themselves. The priest, of course, may as well throw up his hands and prepare to perform the ceremony. What does it avail to cross or thwart her when she will go and get married anyway? This is a free country; she is an American girl and in a position to assert her pluck and independence.

She has made her mistakes—who hasn't? She has figured in the divorce courts, but who will say that it was wholly her fault. What if there have been some 265,000 divorces in the last ten years? Think of the number of happy marriages which have been contracted. What if over a quarter a million of wayward maidens are to be found in the dives and brothels of our metropolitan cities? This is but a small price to pay for her freedom from antiquated restrictions. What if her enemies do assert that her boasted freedom has been purchased at the price of a tarnished reputation? Was she not born to refute the old idea that maidenhood was to be tenderly cared for and guarded. Is it not her privilege to prove to the world that a girl can take care of herself, that she has no need of the guidance of parents or preceptors, that all those old-fogey ideas of the Church about love and marriage need remodeling, and that she is qualified to work out

her own destiny without aid or assistance from any source.

And so let us be glad and joyful that we have lived to see the American girl. Let the poet sing not as of old, of those gentle maidens who were coy and modest and bashful and retiring but of the modern sort who stand out in the limelight inviting all beholders to see and examine for themselves how vast the difference between this production of our later civilization and the old type, who needed the guidance of chaperons and parents and guardians and the restraining influence of religion to preserve the love and respect of a generation, who had no idea of the convenience of the divorce court.

An Explanation.

Generalities, however, are misleading and it is unjust to condemn all our girls for the shortcomings of the few. Nations like individuals have their predominant failings and it s unfortunately too true that a large proportion of our matrimonial misfits can be attributed to a lack of salutary restraints and to a departure from the ancient standards. The Church blesses the marriage state and approves of young people marrying under proper conditions. It rejoices in the knowledge that there are few divorces amongst Catholic people, and that marital happiness is the rule rather than the exception amongst its members. It deplores and deprecates that undue haste in a matter of such vital importance and warns the American girl that there is a fate much more appalling than that of becoming

an old maid. It is the fate awaiting her who enters into a life contract in defiance to the laws of the Church. There is very little real happiness in the world even when placed in the most favorable surroundings. The woman's heart from which God has been cast out is empty, indeed. No human love can fill the void which the absence of God's grace has created. Woman is naturally weak, but irreligious or impious—never!

CHAPTER XIII.

And This is Fate.

No Chance to Talk Back.

I have sometimes felt that the Catholic young woman is hardly ever given a chance to talk back. She is the recipient of a great deal of wholesome advice, and is made to feel in many ways that her chief duty is to listen and learn. She herself is seldom consulted when theories concerning her welfare are propounded, and she must naturally resent the attitude of those who have nothing but advice to give. She cannot help feeling that she has a destiny to work out in the world, and that she is handicapped by the bare fact that the working out of that destiny is largely dependent upon the whims and fancies of the male persuasion. She has to be sought after rather than to seek. She cannot think of being married until she is asked. It is not permitted to her even to make the first advances along sentimental lines, for fear of shocking

the sensibilities of the superior creature who is to be her liege lord and future master. She is expected to be demure and coy, and retiring and bashful, and meek and modest and all that, but if she be passed by in the matrimonial scramble she finds herself designated with the opprobrious epithet of "old maid," and all because she is not supposed to have any rights save those which come to her through the grace and favor of the opposite sex. She is expected to marry a Catholic young man, of course, and she would much prefer to do so, "all things else being equal."

Not Always Her Fault.

It is this last clause of the contract, however, which is the source of much difficulty. The desirable Catholic young man is not so plentiful as he might be, and where he is plentiful he is not always persuasive. Sometimes he is not as conscientious as his Catholic sister, and lavishes his attentions upon young women without the fold. When he is conscientious, he is frequently lacking in pride and ambition, and feels that he is not good enough for the young lady who has received nearly all of the family accomplishments. In this he is often mistaken. She is proud and independent, but she has sense enough to recognize true manhood when she finds it, whether it be in the garb of the artisan or under the more polished exterior of the banker's clerk. Through no fault of hers she is sometimes face to face with the proposition of a "mixed marriage" or no marriage at all. It may be that no marriage would be the best solution of her difficulty, but the

tendrils of the human heart reach out mysteriously, and life and love and happiness are all wonderfully wrapped up in this old marriage problem. Law-givers may legislate, and preachers may preach, and theologians may point out the rough and narrow way that leads to perfection, but the poet who sings of love will be listened to long after preacher and teacher and law-giver have been forgotten. And yet, by a strange anomaly of fate, love itself, the very well-spring and source of human happiness, unless consecrated by faith and founded upon religious motives, is destructive of the very happiness which, like some guilded Quivera, is ever to be found in a youthful land of hope and promises, but which, like the promised land of old, is closed to those who wander in the desert of life. It is the great mystery of life over again—of humanity made for God, striving in vain to find happiness in those things which do not rest upon God or upon a supernatural basis, the vanity of vanities which pagan and believer alike have realized, the bitter wisdom which the world has learned through suffering and sorrow and sin and death.

Our Mistake.

Our system of training is frequently at fault. It runs to extremes. Where our girls are not entirely neglected, they are sometimes over-educated. By this I mean that they are given advantages which are denied to their brothers. The daughters of hard-working, honest parents are kept at school, whilst their brothers are learning trades or spending their time at

hard labor helping to support the family. The whole family is interested in seeing that the girls of the household receive as many of the accomplishments as possible. Music and painting and all those things which go to give a finish to a young lady's training are added, with the result that the daughter of the mechanic or the artisan bye and bye considers herself a degree above her brother in the world and looks for her associates amongst those whose hands are not besmeared with the soot and grime of honest toil. Her brother must look for a wife amongst the girls of a humbler class. The overeducated mechanic's daughter is too good for him. She aspires to a maid and a brownstone front and a husband with immaculate linen. Marry a workingman! Heaven forbid! As a result the banker's clerk and the young professional man are in great demand, even though the dust-begrimed worker draws twice the salary of either of them, and is, as a rule, in every way a very desirable husband.

The cheap piano has turned the heads of many of our girls. As soon as they find themselves able to perpetrate a few of the soulful ballads of the hour on its keys, they begin to look around for some one able to keep them in a style befitting their higher attainments. The hero is sometimes slow in coming, and as a last resort they turn to the horny-handed sons of toil—but only as a last resort.

Must Not Forget.

Notwithstanding all that has been said, it is a fact, nevertheless, that the priest who stands at the altar

railing on Sundays and gazes upon the faces of those who approach the table of the Lord understands well the place which the Catholic young woman occupies in the affections of the Church. He understands why she is treasured and watched over and cared for as the very apple of the Church's eye. It is a place where she is ever in the majority. Despite her shortcomings and her errors, she stands in a class all by herself. Her innocence, purity and maidenly modesty are acknowledged the world over. Humanity pays to her its tribute of respect. Her moral supremacy is unquestioned, and the Church is proud because it has made her so. It is jealous at the same time of her honor, and strives to safeguard by every means within its power. As the wife and mother of the future, her influence for good will be in proportion to the depth of her religious convictions and in her conformity to the highest type of Christian womanhood. This she must never be permitted to forget.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Spineless Young Man.

The letter which follows is so pertinent to the subject in hand that I feel the reader will pardon me for giving it in full:

"—— ——, N. Y., Dec. 12, 1905.

"Dear Reverend Father: I read your article on 'Mixed Marriages,' and I would like to have you treat that subject fully before leaving it. This place has had a surfeit of them, and there are more to follow. I

must tell you of one with which I was recently brought in close contact in a somewhat unusual way. John D——— has been about the only Catholic young man in the town earning a salary of over twelve hundred dollars a year, so we Catholic girls have been looking up to John. Alas! we were not attractive enough, and so he has left us for a pretty, gypsy-like Protestant girl, whose mother was an apostate. The girl was very nice about it, and she said she would go anywhere to be married; but they wanted a big, showy wedding. Mr. D——— asked Father O'C. to marry them after the Rev. Dr. Somebody had gotten through. No one knows just what father said to him in reply, but if what he said from the pulpit on the two following Sundays be a sample of his remarks on that occasion, Mr. D——— was greatly to be pitied. I did not happen to know Mr. D——— personally, but I had to call on a man of his name a few days later on some company business, and, strangely enough, I discovered that the Mr. D——— in question was none other than the prospective bridegroom. I never thought of its being his wedding day, but such it was; and his little mother, who received me at the door, sweetly invited me in, and half-shyly informed me that he was absent on very important business. Well she was a plain little old Irish woman, and lived in the quaintest old-fashioned house. With an Irish whisper, and with a sad little smile, she told me that John was to be married that very day, and did I not know him? I suppose the dear old soul was unhappy, and I did not mend matters by saying, 'Too bad he did not marry one of his own kind!' I could not help it. I thought of the

butterfly Protestant girl coming home to an Irish hearthstone, and I felt it was surely a mistake. Of course, she told me the whole story—how cruel Father O'C. had been, and how sorry she was for the young people. Oh, but I was in a box. I think Father O'C. is just splendid, and said so. Well, then, 'wasn't John right in trying to please the girl's family?" Pledging me to secrecy, she told me, too, that John had gone down to Father Henry, of the neighboring parish, and Father Henry could do nothing for him. And wasn't Father O'C. cruel indeed? 'John said to me this morning,' she continued, 'Mother, I'll be married by no priest,' and isn't he right?' The little mother was full of the romance of true love, and how it never does to cross a man in his marriage. And while I listened to her little tale I wished she had been one of those stalwart mothers who fight for what is right, regardless of consequences. The upshot of it all was that they had a big Protestant wedding, to which many of John's Catholic friends were invited. There is no excommunication here for doing such things, but it makes us all feel sick at heart; and there is nothing but bitter words for the spineless John and his unhappy little mother. Now, father, you have said unpleasant things about us Catholic girls, and I would like to know what you think of young men like John.

"Yours, etc.,
"———— ————."

What I think of John D———— and his kind would not look very well if put into simple, plain, every-day language. I think, however, that the little Irish mother is largely to blame for John's false step. The

true Catholic mother should have been made of sterner stuff. She ought to have had sense enough to realize that the butterfly maiden would have conceded a great deal in matters of religion in order to make sure of John, and been wise enough to impress her son with the importance of standing firm on so momentous an occasion.

Undue Haste.

A clerical friend of mine lays down the proposition that "mixed marriages are always unnecessary." In other words, there is no need of a mixed marriage if the Catholic party be possessed of sufficient zeal. The average non-Catholic has few well-defined religious views. There is still, perhaps, a deep-rooted suspicion of Catholic teaching, but this suspicion is frequently a help rather than a hindrance. Inquiry brings with it an inevitable reaction against religious systems which have so freely employed the weapon of falsehood in their warfare against the Church. And at heart any man or woman worth having will appreciate a zeal which is concerned with their eternal welfare. The Catholic party has a right to demand beforehand a sympathetic study of the Church's position in the interest of future peace. This study can ordinarily be made the occasion of deeper research and final acceptance of the Catholic creed. All this implies deliberation and delay, and our young people are usually in a dreadful hurry when it is a question of marriage. There is more idiocy to the square inch in matters pertaining to marriage than there is in all the other

combined affairs of human existence. Young people are not supposed to be responsible for what they do on such an occasion. The legislation of the Church and the dictates of common sense must give way before the whims and fancies of a maiden who is possessed with a desire to make her nuptials as romantic and as novel as possible. Romance is usually associated with haste, and haste with future regret.

This is a matter in which wisdom and experience avail but little. Misguided love has been, and will continue to be, the most prolific source of human misery and human sin. The Church's legislation has for its purpose the safe-guarding of the virtue and the happiness of those who enter the married state. Human passion is blind. The Church strives with all its might to protect its children from the consequences of this universal blindness.

CHAPTER XV.

Thieves, Common and Otherwise.

Dirty Politics.

The pastor of one of the most important parishes in a great western city recently said to me: "Father, I don't want you to forget 'Dirty Politics' in your treatment of the 'Ought-to-Be's." I believe that in my own parish more men have given up the practice of their religion through political corruption and its consequent evils than through all other causes combined. A very large proportion of the men of this

parish never hear Mass on Sunday. I would not be correct in saying that they have lost the Faith but they have become so dishonest, so corrupt, and so debauched as a consequence of the political methods in vogue in this particular part of the city, that they feel that religion can do them no good.

The ring that has dominated politics in this ward for years has openly stood sponsor for vice and crime in its worst forms. It has protected for a consideration, the dive, the brothel, the obscene theatre, the gambling-den, the low saloon and all those habitations of evil in which the criminals of a city congregate. It has helped to elect notorious grafters and received its share of the plunder. And the sad part of it all is that some of the very worst grafters have been nominal Catholics. The worst theatre we have ever had in this city is owned and controlled by a man of this type. For years it was an assignation house on the largest possible scale, and so open and brazen did the management become, that free tickets of admission were lavishly distributed even amongst the boys of the parochial schools. They were not satisfied with their clientele of Catholic men, young and old. Boys of tender years must be corrupted in order to keep up the supply of dupes and amateur criminals. When I publicly denounced the "system" and the malodorous ring behind it, I was severely censured by many of my own people for meddling in politics. It is all right and proper for so-called Catholic politicians to bring their religion into public disrepute. It is a rank indiscretion in a priest to make war on crime and criminals, provided they come under the protection of what is known

as "politics." He must remain silent and see the boys and young men of his parish sucked down into the maelstrom of iniquity, because, perforce, the beneficiaries of corruption demand that he "stick to his sacristy and leave politics alone."

Pickpocket Ethics.

What is true of this Western city is true of all the great cities of the country. Corrupt politics is everywhere a powerful agency of evil. It brutalizes and degrades men, makes thieves and lawbreakers of them and justifies it all under the pretexts that "they all do it," and that a form of dishonesty which becomes popular and universal is thereby freed from the taint of sin. The thief, therefore, provided he be a statesman, does not come under the same standard of ethics as the common, every-day pick-pocket. The burglar, the defaulter, and all the generations of petty thieves who prey upon society are all held bound in conscience to restitution. The rigors of the old seventh commandment are reserved for them. The gentleman, who for a certain stipulated price helps to rob a state or a municipality—well, he is a thief of another kind and the problem of restitution is at least a doubtful one. There is a moral something about the bribes taken by politicians from thieves and gamblers to permit them to ply their n farious trades and an inviolability about the blood-money filched from fallen women, which renders the application of the principles of restitution

exceedingly difficult. A big Catholic politician grows suddenly rich in mysterious ways and an incredulous public shakes its head and asks the question "Where did he get it?" and the wonder is why the Church tolerates him, and permits him to act as if he be in good standing in her communion. He fools neither the Church nor the public but the Church like the state has to assume that the thief is not a thief until by due process of law he has been proven such. The Church has a private tribunal where thieves without number have been forced to disgorge, but some men's consciences are easily formed and they are as dishonest with the priest in the confessional as they are with the public without.

I sometimes feel that we would do well to preach the sixth commandment less and to dwell at greater length upon the "Thou Shalt not Steal" of the seventh. An impure man is ordinarily more easily converted than a dishonest one. The great stumbling block in the latter's case is restitution. There is no place in Catholic theology for the casuistry which permits thieves to retain ill-gotten goods. The ancient principles of justice and right have not changed. They are as applicable to graft, bribery and corruption in politics as they are to the coarser forms of dishonesty. The moral teaching, which opens a spiritual loophole to the boodler and the grafter is on a par with those technicalities of the law, which enable them to keep out of the penitentiary and thus escape the civil consequences of their misdeeds.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Parish Rebels.

History Repeated.

It is an accepted axiom among priests that the censors, critics and chronic fault-finders of a parish sooner or later give up the faith. It is easy to understand why such should be the case. The bond between the priest as pastor and the people committed to his care is one of the closest and most intimate that can exist between the members of a human family. It is, in a certain sense, a sacramental bond, and one founded upon supernatural motives and calling for an unusual degree of mutual respect and reciprocal confidence. The priest, no matter what his personal faults may be, cannot escape a catholicity of affection for all the members of his flock, and cannot help feeling at the same time some of that breadth of charity exhibited by his Divine Master. His is a fatherly solicitude, which extends to each and every member of his flock, without exception. The least he expects in return for his unceasing interest and unselfish devotion is a filial love and confidence and a readiness to make due allowance for his limitations and shortcomings. He is human and liable to err. Like his flock, he is weak and prone to sin, and he has a right to demand that he shall be treated as a human being and not as an infallibly wise, prudent, perfect and sinless mortal, who always practices heroic virtue and never makes a mistake.

An Odd Answer.

There is a story told of a great French churchman who was sent by the Holy See to investigate a quarrel between a certain Bishop and some of his priests. The dissatisfied priests were called before him one by one, and he put to each of them the same question, "If every priest in this diocese did his duty would there be any trouble?" Divers answers were given, until finally an old priest replied in a manner entirely unexpected. "Your Grace," he said, "as I understand it, Archbishops, Bishops, priests and people do their full duty only when they have attained that stage commonly known as the Beatific Vision. As I understand it, too, even the leaders of Israel examine their consciences and frequently cry 'peccavi,' because they have failed in the performance of that which the world calls duty. I think I have seen it somewhere in an old book that duty destitute of charity is tyranny in those who govern, and arrogant and presumptuous disobedience in those who are governed."

There was a wealth of hidden wisdom in the old priest's answer. The perfect man is so rare that the species may be truly said to be extinct. The priest who can please everybody is an impossibility. The most he can hope for is to please the reasonable and the right-thinking by following the dictates of his conscience and by doing that which to him seems right.

Their Methods.

It not infrequently happens that the parish rebels are the first to welcome a new pastor on his arrival and in the early days of his administration are the loudest in their approval of everything he does. The old guard, the tried and trusted supporters of former administrations, remain in the background. They are glad, in a certain sense, to see the malcontents reconciled and taking their proper place in the ranks of the faithful. If the new pastor be of ordinary sagacity, he is not long in discovering that the best friends of the priest that goes are the best friends of the priest that comes; that the critics of his predecessor will in due season become his critics, and that the chronic fault-finder will return to his or her ways as soon as the novelty of the new order of things has worn away.

I have heard it said by non-Catholic clergymen that the position of the average preacher who depends upon the whims and fancies of a fickle flock is a most undesirable one, and they frequently envy the Catholic priest, whose tenure of office is dependent upon the opinion which the Bishop forms of his fitness for the place, rather than upon the choice of a congregation, few of whom look at the same thing in the same light. It is a truth, nevertheless, that a priest, like any other man, looks for gratitude and appreciation in return for his services. When this gratitude and appreciation are not forthcoming, the cross is hard to bear, and is only made tolerable by the consciousness that God sees it

all and will judge and reward him according to the purposes and motives underlying his actions.

Runs in the Family.

The children of the priest-hunters, as a rule, turn out badly. Reverence and respect for the man who ministers at the altar is essentially a Catholic virtue. Where it is wanting there is something wrong. Where children hear nothing in the home but criticism of the priest and of his methods, and sometimes covert insinuations affecting his good name, they are liable to confound the teachings with the teacher, and to grow up with an instinct of hostility to the creed as well as to the priest.

The parish critic is, in many cases, a disappointed little boss who has failed to rule the pastor. The number of those amateur bosses, male and female, is legion. Their presumption is monumental. They are ready to dictate to the pastor in his church, the Bishop in his cathedral and the Pope on his pontifical throne. If the priest be a man of extraordinary patience, all is well; but if there be limits and bounds to his tolerance of such people, the break comes sooner or later, and the boss is put to confusion and taught a severe lesson. If, again, instead of taking the lesson to heart, he feels aggrieved, he forthwith constitutes himself one of those trials and crosses which are the bitter portion of every priest's life, and which win for many of them the true crown of priestly martyrdom.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Critic in the Pulpit.

An Objection.

"And what have you to say," some one writes, "of the critic who occupies the pulpit? What do you think of chronic fault-finding in the preacher of severe censure, of indefensible and sometimes unprovoked abuse of the people? Have they no rights which the pulpit is bound to respect? Shall the mirror of nature be held constantly before them and discreet silence be preserved when it is a question of the man, who frequently provokes the parish rebels to anger and recrimination?"

I do not consider the point to be well taken. As a rule, the priest in the pulpit, like the priest in the confessional, sinks his own personality and delivers his message with a single eye to the salvation of his hearers. He may not be wise, prudent and judicious in all his utterances, but the fact remains that if some of his hearers feel aggrieved it is because, in the majority of cases, the shoe pinches and the shafts delivered at random here and there hit a shining mark.

I have sometimes felt that if there be any room for reproach against the pulpit, it is because of our lack of courage rather than because of fearlessness and

plain speaking. The charge frequently made against the non-Catholic pulpit of the country is that it is time-serving, and dares not attack sin and vice in their strongholds. There is a story told of a young Anglican curate who consulted his pastor as to a subject for his sermon on the following Sunday. Subject after subject was suggested, only to be rejected, for fear of offending the sensibilities of the people, some of whom were of high-church and some of low-church tendencies. The pastor finally settled the matter in an off-hand way. "My son," he said, "my advice to you is this: Pitch into the Scribes and Pharisees, they have no friends!" It is the Pharisees of to-day, however; who are the first to resent the fearlessness and courage of the Catholic pulpit.

The Old Fogey Pastor.

One of the most cherished remembrances of my youthful days is that of a pioneer priest whose ministrations have blessed my native parish for almost half a century. He is distinctively of the "old school," and higher criticism and modern philosophical quibbling with the great fundamentals find short shrift when they come in contact with his clear brain and unquestioning acceptance of the whole body of Catholic doctrine. I can still see the dry smile with which, on the occasion of a visit a few months ago, he dismissed the Abbe Loissey's contentions. "These philosophical

fellows," he said, "would have us believe that a fisherman was incapable of writing the Gospel of St. John. Our Lord knew better than to choose philosophers for apostles. Most of the errors of the world have come from philosophical chairs. Philosophy rejected Christ in the beginning. Its acceptance of His teachings has always struck me as being half-hearted and insincere. A fisherman could not write such a gospel, forsooth! If he could not, we are safe in asserting that a philosopher would be the last man in the world to be chosen for such a task."

We of the younger generation were wont in the olden days to regard our pastor as belonging to the old fogy type. From time to time we had an assistant, and the assistant, strange to say, was always more popular than the pastor. Many of us, however, have lived and learned, and somehow, with the growth of years, the conviction has grown upon me that the old pastor, with his rough and rugged honesty, his plain speaking and his steadfast insistence upon the great essentials, is not out of place even in this day and age; that his clear, unquestioning faith and his everlasting hammering away at plain, common, every-day mortal sin has still a large place in the economy of righteousness; that modern dilletantism and modern care for the proprieties has much to learn from the old priest, who still calls a spade a spade and who takes no pains to sugarcoat the medicine which he administers to the weak in faith and morals.

The Real Grievance.

The finanacial problem frequently lies at the root of many people's grievance against the pulpit. The priest must of necessity deal with money matters in a public way and one of the unpleasant things in connection with the whole business is that the many must be made to suffer because of the lack of readiness to do their duty on the part of the few. I am safe in asserting, however, that no one regrets the necessity of bringing money matters into the pulpit more than the priest, and many of them undergo privations and let important parish interests suffer and go by default rather than justify the oft-repeated calumny of the critics that "it is money, money, and always money."

Must Be a Gentleman.

When I was in the seminary I heard a great deal about the necessity of the priest ever and always being a gentleman. The word "gentleman" is a very indefinite term. The commonly accepted definition is: "One who never hurts the feelings of another." The priest, who, from the pulpit, never hurts the feelings of his auditors is to be complimented on ministering to a people who are well-nigh spirtually perfect. It is a case, however, where diplomacy may easily be another name for time-serving, and popularity be only another term for failure to preach the great eternal truths committed to the pastor's keeping.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Freaks and Faddists.

Pernicious Piety.

I have a clerical friend whose life has been made miserable for several years through the idiosyncracies of a pious maiden lady, who fancies she has a mission in life. That mission is to promote the cause of total abstinence on every possible occasion. She is full of the most ardent zeal, but it is a zeal totally devoid of judgment. She has two bachelor brothers of very temperate habits, but she lives in an agony of fear lest they go out some night and come back confirmed inebriates.

Her propaganda assumes a great variety of forms. She will stop the wife of a saloon-keeper in the vestibule of the church and plead with her to turn her husband from his evil ways. She mails radical temperance literature to prominent churchmen all over the country, and calls upon them to come out openly and courageously and assail the rum demon. She is full of dramatic invective, and bobs up in unexpected places with tracts and sermons, which she is ready to distribute on the slightest provocation. In short, she is a pious nuisance of the most pronounced type, but the good priest has a hesitancy about suppressing her lest he prevent her doing a certain amount of good amongst men and women of her own peculiar mental

caliber. He is at the same time morally convinced that in the long run she does more harm than good, and solemnly avers that women of her kind drive sane and sober people to drink.

Her case, however, is not uncommon. She is merely one of many. The variety is almost infinite, but there are certain well-defined characteristics about them which serve to put them in a class all by themselves. They possess all the outward appearances of piety, but there is at bottom a spirit of criticism and disobedience to authority which sometimes leads to heresy and open rebellion. The old church does not move fast enough for them. They find many of the Protestant churches to be dominated by cranks and fool reformers, and they are surprised when priests and Bishops do not bubble over with enthusiasm, when their projects for the reformation and sanctification of the world are brought to their notice.

Various Forms.

Sometimes the crank is a well-meaning lady with a chain-prayer to some favorite saint, promising extraordinary rewards for a faithful recitation of the same and threatening dire calamities for failure to comply with the conditions laid down. In such matters the approbation of the Holy See and the "nihil obstat" of the Bishop are regarded as being wholly unnecessary. It is enough to state that it was revealed to some holy

cenobite or to some pious woman with an impaired digestion to make it an object of crank credulity.

Sometimes it is a sensitive soul with a call to establish a new and hitherto unheard of devotion in a parish; and when the pastor manifests a lack of interest it is a certain sign that he is lacking in zeal. Sometimes, again, it is pronouncedly pious graft masquerading under the guise of a popular devotion, and solely dependent for its success upon its appeal to the sympathies of this abnormal class of Catholics who cannot be made to understand that appeals of every kind should ever and always receive the sanction of the proper ecclesiastical authorities. Sometimes it is a believer in the wonder-working powers of some saintly relic of doubtful authenticity, or a would-be pilgrim to some far-off European shrine where the natives believe that some pious fetisch carried on their persons will protect them from the eternal fires, even if they miss Mass on Sundays and receive the sacraments only when in proximate danger of death. Such people are always ready to devote themselves to anything which bears the charm of novelty or to labor in a strange cause, but they hold themselves indifferent to the interests of their home parish, and regard with suspicion the priest who clings to the beaten paths and who fears to expose pious grafts and pious grafters lest he scandalize the weak who might be shocked at the things which are being done all over the world in the name of religion.

Spiritual Fads.

It is difficult to make some Catholics understand that the great means of salvation are those which are ready to hand—the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist, prayer and the hearing of Mass whenever possible, but under penalty of grievous sin on Sundays and holy days. It is difficult to make them understand that devotion to our Immaculate Mother and to God's great saints does not rest upon private and accidental revelations to obscure individuals, but is part and parcel of the body of Catholic doctrine. It is difficult to make them understand that there are dangerous spiritual fads which priests and Bishops tolerate for fear of greater evils. It may shock many of them to learn that some of the greatest churchmen of the age regard the sad state of the Church in France and many European countries as the natural consequence of an undue following after the accidentals, whilst the great essentials of Catholicity were being neglected. The very people who will celebrate a feast day with great eclat and go in pilgrimage to some famous shrine will not hear Mass on Sundays and holy days, and will smile at the idea of making their Easter duty.

I am far from condemning any holy or pious Catholic practice. They all play their part in the Catholic system, but it must never be forgotten that it is a minor part, and that insistence upon the great essentials lies at the root of a nation's steadfastness in the run of centuries.

CHAPTER XIX.

Masonry.

An Enigma.

I have been many times asked why it is that France, though nominally a Catholic country, persists in bitterly persecuting the Church, and I must confess that I have frequently been at a loss for an answer. The French situation is very much of an enigma to the average American. I have asked the same question of French priests and French laymen, and have never been satisfied with the answer. One of the shrewdest of American priests, and at the same time one of our ablest editorial writers, visited France within the last year, and on his return declared openly his inability to fathom the situation. On his return from a previous visit he had positively announced that the end of the French Republic was near at hand. On both occasions he had studied the situation right on the ground, and had come into close contact with some of the leading citizens and churchmen of France without arriving at any conclusion as to the real causes of the difficulties between the Church and the State.

I believe, however, that the difficulty in France is a political rather than a religious one. A corrupt, unscrupulous political regime has the country by the throat, and its object in this persecution is simply and plainly plunder. The spoilation of the religious orders

is plain robbery, pure and simple, and can be called by no other name.

"Why," some one will ask, "have not the people risen up and deprived those robber politicians of their power for evil?" And my answer is "Why have the people of this country permitted graft to become so prevalent in State and municipal affairs, notwithstanding the fact that it clearly lies in their power to oust the grafters?" Thieving politicians are the same the world over, and France to-day has the most corrupt political organization on the face of the earth. Its ramifications spread out into every community Backed by an immense army of "functionaries," whose offices depend upon the pleasure of those in power, it controls elections, counts the votes and sees to it that the people's representatives are its own creatures. Popular government is a colossal farce. It is the reign of a corrupt ring perpetuating itself by corrupt methods, and having for its purpose the aggrandizement of those who control and manage it. There is less real liberty in France to-day than in any European country, Russia and Turkey not excepted. Its government is an organized gang of thieves, who, having tired of plundering the country at large, have now turned their attention to the revenues and possessions of the Church.

Behind the Throne.

Back of it all stands a powerful secret society controlled and dominated to a large extent by the Jews of

Europe—a society whose boast is that it controls the politics and dictates the policies of the leading European governments. I am not a Jew-baiter, and believe in justice to the Jew as well as to the Christian; but, from a close examination of Freemasonry, and particularly of European Freemasonry, I have come to the conclusion that it may be rightly termed to-day a covert sect of modern Judaism. The Jew, through this society, is getting back at the Christians of the world for the wrongs and injustices visited upon him during many centuries. The results are certainly creditable to his foresight and sagacity.

This, I am well aware, is a somewhat radical view, and one that will be pooh-poohed by many of my readers. I believe, however, that this view furnishes the key to the solution of the French political enigma and to many other political problems of recent times. It is an indisputable fact that Freemasonry is the power behind the throne in nearly every country in Europe, and it is, at the same time, an equally indisputable fact that European Freemasonry is largely under the control and direction of the Jews.

One thing has struck me forcibly in examining the religious principles and rites to which Freemasonry clings and that those principles and rites are almost purely Judaistic. I think it can be clearly shown, too, that the policy of the "inner circle" is antagonistic to Christianity in every country in the world, and particularly to the strongest and most consistent of the Christian denominations—the Catholic Church.

A Bad Record.

There are those in the Church to whom Masonry is a nightmare, and those again, who regard it as a much overrated influence for evil. It has been specifically condemned by the Holy See, first, because in almost all European countries it has been the hotbed of revolution and rebellion against the lawfully constituted authorities; secondly, because it has claimed, and still claims in principle, the power of life and death over its members; thirdly, because it claims in certain matters to be above the law in every country in the world, and, fourthly, because of its open warfare upon the Papacy in its numerous struggles with its temporal foes, and particularly with the Sardinian usurper.

It is an old boast of the Masons that a member of the craft has rarely suffered the extreme penalty of the law for the crime of deliberate murder. There are well authenticated cases on record in which Masons have escaped the consequences of grave crimes, such as treason, homicide and the like, because of their affiliation with the society. And yet we hear it said the Church is illiberal and lacking in the modern spirit in condemning an organization with such a history and standing for such vicious principles.

I am willing to concede that if Masonry throughout the world were as we find it here in America there would be little need for severity on the part of the Church, but the Church is a world-wide institution and

stands for world-wide principles. It has never lacked the courage to condemn error, no matter how powerfully intrenched: and in condemning Masonry it has conferred a priceless boon upon the civilized world and struck at one of the most dangerous and insidious foes of the human race.

It has been demonstrated long ago to the satisfaction of the church authorities that the Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias are nothing more or less than cheap imitations of Masonry and that the influences of these societies have not been favorable to Catholic faith and practice. The ideal which they hold to their members is a pagan rather than a Christian one and the Catholic Church still clings to the belief that the Christian ideal is that towards which humanity must strive.

Favoritism and Injustice.

We have heard it said that there is no place in Masonry for bad men, but we have found it dominated in many places by unscrupulous politicians and by men of doubtful moral standing amongst their neighbors. We have seen it made the medium of gross favoritism and rank injustice wherever the interests of brother Masons are at stake. We have found in the works of its authorized writers violent opposition to the Church and religion in general, and we have come to the conclusion that the Church acted wisely and well in forbidding Catholics, under pain of excommunication, to enter its secret portals.

The Church has been dealing with the world for almost two thousand years, and is acquainted by this time with most of the weak spots in humanity's armor. It has guided its children, century after century, through the mazes of doubt and error. It has issued triumphant from the conflict with mightier foes than Masonry, and is quick to discern the cloven hoof under the garb of spurious morality and counterfeit philanthropy. There is no halt in its message and no fear in its tone when it proclaims, as it did in the olden days, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

A Strange Admission.

The Church is neither liberal, modern, progressive nor free in the commonly accepted meaning of those terms. It cannot be liberal in dealing with truth, for liberality in matters pertaining to truth is ridiculous. Liberality with the multiplication table, with the problems of Euclid or with scientific truths in general is inconceivable. Why, then, demand it when the highest of all truths and principles are called into question? It cannot be modern, because God, the devil and humanity have not changed since the day of its institution. It cannot be progressive, because progress implies change, and there is no change in the conditions upon which the world's salvation depends. The Church is free with the freedom of Christ, but it is not free to teach error or to compromise with vicious principles, no matter how carefully sugar-coated or how insidiously advanced. It might have gained many

a temporary victory in the past by compromising with wrong, by acceding to the desires of time-serving generations; but such victories would have robbed it long since of the world's respect, and would have brought it down to the level of those men-made creeds. "who crook the pregnant hinges of the knee that thrift may follow fawning."

CHAPTER XX.

The Fraternals and Cheap Insurance.

Overdone.

The secret society business, in Western parlance, has run itself into the ground. There is hardly a grown person in the country to-day who does not belong to some one or other of the numerous lodges that have sprung up on all sides. To the credit of the small lodges, it may be said that they have administered a severe blow to the pretensions of Masonry. American Masonry is a sort of rich man's social club, and a poor man has no business in it. It claims to possess a superior brand of brotherly benevolence, but the fact remains that here, as elsewhere, its higher circles today to the rich and great in the social and political world. Its benefits are largely imaginary, and its influence a negative quantity in an age which demands, above all things, business ability and personal integrity. It is still, perhaps, within its power to make or unmake a politician, but the honor of such a proceeding is at best a very doubtful one.

The fraternal orders do a great deal of positive good, and were it not for their silly rituals and their apings of the secret forms of the condemned societies their membership would never be called into question by the authorities of the Church. The ritual is the chief obstacle, and it seems strange that more of those societies have had not sagacity enough to remove this bar to Catholic membership.

Protection vs. Piety.

Catholics want insurance, not religion; and they resent the presumption of those who attempt to supply them with both. How often have we heard it said by non-Catholics, "My lodge is religion enough for me."

It is this attempt on the part of such organizations to supply a code of morals as well as protection for the heirs after death which the Church resents, and will continue to resent.

The average Protestant is of the broad-gauge type, and anything in the line of a religious ritual or ceremony is permissible. They wonder why it is that Catholic priests will not permit prayers and ceremonies originating in a committee of indifferent Christians to be tacked on to the regular Catholic burial service, or, in fact, to take the place of such services. These rites and ceremonies may mean anything or nothing. They are performed over the pagan, Jew or Christian with equal readiness, and, from the standpoint of spirituality, imply nothing but the universal belief of Ameri-

cans that it is good form to bury people with a religious ceremony of some kind.

There seems to be a general impression at the same time that cheap insurance has no attractions except when coupled with an opportunity to go through some childish form of initiation, and that degrees and high-sounding titles must form an essential part of such initiation. The whole thing is nothing more nor less than a species of hazing, indulged in by fathers and mothers of families and by people who ought to know better. It is a compound of horseplay and buffoonery, with a few attenuated principles of wordly wisdom and Christian charity thrown in for effect.

Blind Obedience.

I have not dwelt at any length upon the element of blind obedience which enters to a certain extent into the initiatory ceremonies of nearly all the secret orders. Few of them demand an obedience which conflicts with a member's conscience, and amongst those who still retain it in their ceremonials there is a disposition to regard it as an obsolete and unreasonable requirement and one which the intelligence and good sense of the world has outgrown.

No reasonable man to-day questions the value of life insurance, and its important place in the struggle for existence. It is the poor man's best means of providing for his family, and the Church recognizes

this fact by giving its approval to fraternal orders which are distinctively Catholic. Those Catholic societies are doing everywhere to-day a vast amount of good, and there is no danger that at some future time their members will be compelled to leave them because of some implicit or explicit condemnation on the part of those who guard the spiritual welfare of the faithful.

A Few Whys.

It is only just that we should give the condemned secret societies full credit for all the good they do. They care for the sick and the afflicted, comfort the widow and the orphans and in doing this do a truly noble and commendable work. All this, however, and more could be done without making such organizations mediums for the propagation of irreligious and dangerous principles. The Church says to those societies, Keep the good you have and eliminate the evil, and we will approve and and praise rather than rebuke and condemn. Cut out your silly rituals; leave religion alone; do not try to make your constitutions and by-laws a complete code of morals for your members, and all will be well. The Church believes in protecting the family. It believes in works of benevolence and deeds of brotherly love. It declares at the same time true morality to be impossible without Jesus Christ and His saving doctrines, and that to it has been committed the task of imparting the principles of religious truth

which lie at the root of Christian morals. Do as the American Constitution does; leave religion to the churches and devote your energies to those things which tend to the social uplifting and the physical betterment of your fellow-men and the ban of condemnation will be speedily removed. You cannot claim kinship with the secret fomentors of revolution and rebellion in other lands and find fault with the Church which has the courage to condemn your secret political machinations. We refuse to accept your vague and nebular principles of morality as a substitute for revealed truth, your particular brand of brotherly love as a substitute for true Christian charity. We have heard all your high-sounding professions, your loud proclamations of devotion to the golden rule; but it is not these we want. We want a few facts. If you stand for correct principles and high ideals, why cloak it all with a garb of absolute secrecy? Why not proclaim those great truths and much-lauded principles from the very house-tops? The world stands in sore need of preachers such as you claim to be. Why imitate the Egyptian priests of old and impart your saving truths to the select few who have crossed "the burning sands" on the backs of mythical camels, which to the unitiated bears a striking resemblance to that superstition of which you are so ready to accuse us? Name if you can one single movement which you have inaugurated for the uplifting of the race? Your words are not enough. We wants deeds and facts, not empty platitudes and meaningless professions.

Consequence and Cause.

I have found that Catholic men as a rule enter the forbidden secret societies only after they have grown remiss in the practice of their religion. I have found, too, that it is the poorly instructed who are most easily caught by the pretensions of such organizations. Mystery and secrecy have ever had an attraction for the human species. When to these is added the promise of an indefinite influence and a higher authority amongst men through a secret bond of fellowship, we can understand something of the hold which such societies retain over the uneducated and the uninstructed. It is a reversal of the ancient axiom, "Knowledge is power." Under the new order of things there is a possibility that ignorance can become powerful and assume a position to which it is not otherwise entitled, and hence arises the oft-repeated and oft-refuted accusation that the Church, for the furtherance of its own ends, delights to hold its children in ignorance and darkness. It is not the light, however, which the Church fears, but the arrogant and pretentious substitute which goes by that name amongst the children of darkness the world over. It is not liberty which it fears so much as the insidious and dangerous thraldom, born of unbridled license and corrupted morals, which passes for liberty amongst the multitude. The Church fears ignorance almost as much as it fears sin. After three hundred years of warfare with organized falsehood, it is prepared to welcome everything which makes for light and truth.

CHAPTER XXI.

Fighting for the Future.

The Sore Spot.

The real sore spot of America is the neglect of the religious training of the children. We have become a nation of unbelievers, and all because so-called Christian fathers and mothers fail to instill into the minds and hearts of their children the fundamental teachings of Christianity. I believe that thoughtful Protestants all over the country are beginning to realize more and more every day the wisdom of the Catholic Church in establishing parochial schools wherever possible. They realize that they are face to face with a crisis, and that unless some steps be taken to safeguard the faith of the coming generations, evangelical Christianity is doomed to early decay. The Sunday school, with its half-hour or hour of religious instruction of no particular and definite character, has been found to be insufficient. Where there is no home training in Christian principles and no insistence upon the fundamentals in dogmas and morals, it is worse than useless. It was fashionable amongst non-Catholics a generation ago to assert that Catholic children were reared in ignorance and superstition. The ignorance and superstition of the Protestant children who come from time to time to our own Sunday schools are truly appalling. I have personally taken pains on many occasions to find out

what such children know of God and of the things of God. Their knowledge of Christian teaching is, as a rule, of the of the most elementary kind. They have been told something of our blessed Lord and a great many things about the intrinsic excellence of goodness in general, but the instruction imparted to them is of that mawky, sentimental, indeterminate kind which vanishes with the ideals and emotions of childhood. The child is taught to memorize a few texts of Scripture, but even in matters pertaining to the Sacred Scriptures he finds, at home, much incredulity and much that tends to render valueless the instruction imparted to him in the Sunday school. There never was a time when intelligent Protestants longed so earnestly and so ardently for a definite and distinct body of religious doctrine. Nebular Christianity is an absolute, total and irretrievable failure. Deny it as they may, they are turning to the old Church for guidance in doctrine and practice, and demonstrating in an effective way the truth of Frederick Harrison's famous assertion that "time vindicates every Catholic principle."

Not so Excellent.

Many of our people have come to the conclusion, somehow, that the education given in our parish schools is inferior to that given in the public schools. The real truth is that in our Catholic institutions the training is vastly more thorough, more

systematic and more practical. I am writing of the West, and of conditions with which I am more or less familiar. And here it can be said, with due regard to truth and justice, that our public school system leaves much to be desired. Out here everybody who goes through public school graduates and graduation means simply that the pupil has passed through a certain number of grades and has followed the regular curriculum of the school for a certain number of years. From the High School the pupil passes to the University and here again the same methods prevail. Everybody, who enters and spends the prescribed time graduates and there is scarcely any such a thing as being set back for ignorance or incompetency. I have found everywhere in our Catholic schools a striving after thoroughness, particularly in the primary grades and a disposition to avoid those fads, with which the public school curriculum is overloaded. Our teaching orders as a rule, are up-to-date and strictly alive to the educational needs of the hour. They realize that to succeed they must do even better work than the public schools, and hence our schools are characterized everywhere by thoroughness, efficiency and a striving after the practical in educational matters. We have not the means at our disposal, which the public schools have, but our children have the advantage from the standpoint of sane and practical methods and they possess the additional advantage of being educated under a system which recognizes the fact that they have immortal souls and that the spiritual welfare of the children is paramount to all other considerations.

CHAPTER XXII.

Simple but Sublime.

A Bitter Lesson.

The so-called Reformaton impressed upon the Church for all time to come the danger of popular ignorance, particularly in those matters which bear upon religion. Nations and peoples accepted the new creeds of the reformers without realizing the magnitude of the principles involved in the change of faith. The movement came like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky. There was no heresy or error to combat, and the shepherds slept unconscious of the fact that an enemy lurked without the fold. Printing was invented. Human knowledge became more easy of access. New hopes were suddenly aroused in the bosoms of the downtrodden masses of the world. The shepherds still slept. They did not realize until too late that a new power had entered and taken its place on the world's stage and that because of that new power the Church would rule henceforth not so much through threats and anathemas as through appeals to human intelligence and to the highest and best instincts of the human heart. The fathers of the Church who met in the great Council of Trent did much for truth and civilization. The canons of that council are the common law of Christianity. In them there is no shuffling, no quibbling, no equivocation, no compromise, but a clear-cut declaration of Christian

truth and Christian teaching. But this is not the council's greatest glory. Its greatest glory is its trumpet call inviting priests and people the world over to labor unceasingly for the instruction of children in the simple, plain, common, every-day truths of religion. From that hour the care of the children has been the dominant note of the Church's activity, and the all-importance of this duty has grown upon the Church with the growth of years.

The True Pastor.

I am about to make a strange statement, and it is this: I regard the encyclical of our Holy Father on the teaching of catechism as the most important document of its kind that has emanated from the See of Peter, since the days of the Council of Trent. It deals with no perversion of the human intellect, with none of the philosophical errors so prevalent in the world. It deals with the real sore spot of humanity—neglect of the religious training of the children. We can see the consequence of this neglect on all sides. The proofs are ready to hand. It was reserved for a Sovereign Pontiff who had been a parish priest, who had seen with his own eyes the fruits of this neglect amongst the members of his flock, to call the attention of the Christian world from imaginary and secondary dangers to that which constitutes a perpetual and ever-present menace. Ask any parish priest, as he stands on the altar, to look out upon his flock can pick out those who, in his opinion, will certainly be lost to the

Church in the days to come. The task is not an easy one, but there is one class of whose defection he is almost certain. That class comprises the poor, neglected, half-instructed children of the careless and the indifferent. They are the future "ought-to-be's" of the Church in every country in the world. They offer no problems calling for the application of intricate solutions, but for the simple, plain, common, homely remedy—the catechism, in the hands of the earnest parent and the zealous priest. We have had enough and more than enough of the abstract and the philosophical. The Holy Father realizes this, and bids us get down to the useful and the practical. When the great Gerson gave up his professor's chair to teach catechism to little children, he gave an example which many modern professors might well imitate. We need fewer professors and more catechists; less beating of the air concerning controverted points of philosophy and theology and more attention to those first principles embodied in catechetical teaching. "Teach the catechism to the children in the homes, teach it to the children in the churches." This is the burden of the Holy Father's message. Happy the country that realizes its importance and endeavors to live up to it.

A determined stand for Catholic principles lies at the root of all the Church's victories. The weak-kneed, temporizing policy has always failed. In its demand for a Catholic training for our Catholic children the Church is merely following the instinct of self-preservation. We are building schools to-day at a great

sacrifice and supporting them all over the country, because we learned to our cost years ago that our children could not be educated in an atmosphere of religious indifference, or perhaps positive hostility, without becoming tainted and poisoned by that atmosphere. One of the strangest things, however, in connection with this whole matter is the fact that many apparently intelligent Catholics have failed to realize the importance of the principles at stake, and that they persist in disregarding the lessons of the past as well as the positive legislation of the present. Such people surely put an effective argument in the mouths of those who believe that one religion is as good as another.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Why Girls go Wrong.

Almost Unanimous.

The Legislature of Massachusetts has just passed a bill forbidding girls under seventeen years of age to attend public dances unless accompanied by the parents or guardians. On the face of it, it seems a more or less indefinite law; but it was passed almost unanimously because there was a cry from every part of the State that hundreds of girls were being brought to destruction through attendance at public dance halls and similar places of amusement. Over fifty dives

and dens of iniquity were closed in Buffalo last week, and the keepers of those dives retorted by declaring unanimously that the girls who frequented their places were already ruined and depraved when they came there, and that the great medium through which their ruin had been brought about was the public dance halls and skating rinks—places of amusement where young girls were allowed to go and meet whomsoever they would.

The chief of police of New York has made public a statement, in which he says that "three-fourths of the abandoned women of the city were made so by dancing." When Governor Folk was district attorney of Missouri he stated that over eighty per cent. of the unfortunate women of St. Louis became such through the dance halls and dancing parlors of the city. And these men are not alone in their opinion. A mother superior of the Convent of the Good Shepherd assured me the other day that a great majority of the girls under the care of their sisters all over the country had been led away from the path of virtue through the medium of the dance. Statements such as these are calculated to make earnest people at least stop and think. Girls do not become bad in a day or a week. It is usually a slow process. Most of them are weak and fall, let it be candidly said, through forms of temptation which are commonly considered to be sources of legitimate amusement and recreation. The devil scarcely ever fails to sugar-coat the deadly drug. In spite of all the countless army of harlots, from Herodias down to the New York Bowery, there are those who will not believe

that so simple a form of amusement as dancing can be attended with such serious results.

Well to Admit.

It is well right here, I think, to make an admission. Amongst the young people of this day and age dancing is one of the most popular forms of amusement. I will admit, at the same time, that under proper supervision dancing can be made a more or less harmless pastime. Our Catholic girls, as a rule, are pure and clean of heart. They are innocent, and the dance, under proper environments, is rarely a source of danger. All this I know to be true, but it is true only of those girls who have pleasant homes and home surroundings. It is the poor girl who has to seek without her own home the amusement and recreation which the youthful heart craves, who has to go out on the streets for her associates and companions, who, being shut out from what is known as good society, seeks those forms of amusement where all the classes and conditions of society, but particularly the worst, meet and mingle on an equal basis. Here is where the real harm is done. Any form of amusement in which the innocent are brought into familiar contact with the base and the vicious is reprehensible, and should be avoided as the plague. The parents of such girls generally find out, when too late, that what is no temptaiton to them may have proven a grievous temptation to young people with the heyday of youth coursing through their veins.

A Misnomer.

It should not be forgotten, at the same time, that the unfavorable character of the home surroundings has frequently much to do with the subsequent career of the children. Boys and girls have frequently gone to destruction because their homes were unworthy of being designated by that sacred title. It is not always a question of poverty. Some of the best men and women that the world ever saw came out of poor and humble homes. Riches have been, from the beginning, more productive of vice than poverty. There is patience and purity, and self-denial and unselfishness to be found in abundance in the lives of our Catholic poor. It is a lack of the home spirit—a something which makes the home different from any other place in the world. And the absence of this home spirit is frequently found amongst the better classes, sometimes even amongst those whom the world calls rich. Wherever it is found, the children seek for their recreation elsewhere, and are in constant danger of falling under influences which are never present in the true home.

I have frequently seen it that a fruitful source of destruction of the young is the drink evil, and particularly in the case of the mother of the family. A drunken mother is almost too horrible to contemplate. Can it be wondered at that the children of such a mother go wrong? The wonder would be rather, if reared in such conditions, they should retain even the outward appearance of virtue. Fortunately, such examples are rare, and it can be said with truth that it is not the

drunken mother who is most frequently to blame. It is the unwise mother, who has not endeavored to make the home a real home, who has lost control of her children in their early years and who cannot exert it when the time comes for her to do so. Her task is hard at any time and at all times. It is particularly so when she has reared her children without the salutary restraints of religion and worldly prudence. This is an old theme, but it is, unfortunately one that is ever new. The French have a saying, when a man goes wrong, "Look for the woman in the case"—"Cherchez la femme." When girls go wrong, look to the home and seek for the cause in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred in the lack of the proper home influences and, above all, of the home restraints. It is the sore spot of the world over again in a common and most pathetic form.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Other Side.

The Girl Who Works.

The American girl who is earning her own living, and striving earnestly to be all that she should be, is certainly deserving of a great deal of respect. It matters not what her race or creed may be, or in what class of toilers her lot is cast, she is an honor to her sex, and the nation takes its hat off to her wherever she is found. Her path is rarely strewn with roses, and as a rule it is beset with many temptations. She

comes sooner or later to have rather a poor opinion of the whole male persuasion, and the reasons are self-evident. She finds, too, that eternal vigilance is the price of a pure conscience and an unsullied reputation. She sees the weak, the willful, the wayward, the foolish, and the indiscreet fall by the wayside, and she has the consolation of knowing that she is happier and better off in every way than those who wandered from the ways of innocence.

Young women of this kind nearly always possess a certain sensitiveness of conscience; for a genuinely good woman devoid of religion and conscience is almost inconceivable. If she be a Catholic, she learns early in life that womanly virtue is largely of a supernatural character, and depends in a great measure upon the supernatural aids which religion supplies.

It must not be forgotten, however, that her more unfortunate sister was not born bad. She possessed the same innate love of righteousness, and whilst she went down through the successive stages of wrong-doing, she never ceased to be a woman, with a woman's love of innocence and purity and a woman's loathing of the weakness against which she struggled in vain.

The Crucial Time.

In most cases it was the initial stage that determined her fate. The initial stage has always and ever been the same. It is the stage of parental neglect, the crucial time in a girl's life, when, through youth and immaturity, she takes the first wrong step. And right

here is to be found the cause of causes, as far as the destruction of our young women is concerned. American fathers and mothers have departed from the ancient standards in the bringing up of their children, and particularly of their girls. We have somehow come to believe that the girl baby, rocked in the cradle of American liberty, is immune from the contagion of vice; that there is a something in the American atmosphere which justifies a freedom from the restraints imposed upon young people by every work on dogma and morals that has ever been written. We seem to feel somehow that our young people can enjoy liberties which were not permissible in the days of their fathers and mothers, and that a virtue which will not stand the test is scarcely worth preserving.

An Abused Term.

Commonplace statistics and unassailable facts must give way before a modern system of morals which holds, as a basic principle, that if the observance of the Ten Commandments be incompatible with the fullest exercise of human liberty, so much the worse for the Commandments. As a result the nation has paid a bitter penalty. It has witnessed an annual holocaust of young men and maidens offered at the shrine of a false goddess, to whom has been given one of the most sacred of all names—liberty. It has witnessed the gradual removal of all moral restraints, but, saddest of all, the removal of those parental restraints which lie at the root of a nation's righteousness.

"Let me write a nation's songs and I care not who makes her laws," said an old poet. In these words he merely gives expression to the great truth that home influences and the character of the nation's homes inevitably determine the trend of a nation's life.

A Voice From the Past.

"O Christian parents," said a great French preacher a hundred years ago, "care for your boys, but, above all, care for your girls in their tender years. Care for them as the tigress careth for her young; care for them as the eagle careth for its brood. Beware of that liberty whose enjoyment is fraught with destruction. The days are evil in which we live. The tempter is abroad in many guises, and the hearts of the innocent are frequently corrupted even before you suspect the presence of danger. Remember the days of your own youth, and the hidden snares which encompassed your paths. Remember, too, that this a matter in which it is better to sin now on the side of severity than later on to have your gray hairs brought down in sorrow to the grave."

Those words are as applicable to our own times and conditions as if they had been uttered yesterday. Parental neglect is the cause of causes when there is question of American girls who have gone wrong. The fathers and mothers of the country—even those who are Catholic—have departed from the ancient standards. They have become inoculated with the poison of liberal ideas and a bogus morality. The maxims of

the saints, the warnings of religion, the wisdom of the centuries that have passed and gone are all forgotten in the midst of a senseless clamor for a vague freedom in matters where freedom means nothing but the privilege of violating the Commandments with impunity.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Fallen Woman.

Truly Appalling.

I have been assured by one of the most eminent criminologists of the country that there are more than 300,000 fallen women in the towns and cities of the United States. By the term "fallen women" I mean the professionally vicious, and these alone. There is no means of computing that great army of unfortunate maidens who have "gone wrong," but who have still enough of the sensibilities of true womanhood left to preserve the outer semblance of respectability. There is no denying that there are altogether too many of them, but it is not with these that we are at present concerned. It is with the former class, and I am sure no one will deny that the foregoing figures are truly appalling. They simply mean that almost five per cent. of the adult female population of the country belong to that degraded, unhappy class known the world over as fallen women.

I have always believed that it ill becomes any man to speak in bitter terms of such unfortunates. They are objects of pity and commiseration rather than of reproach and blame. They are in many cases the unhappy victims of vicious men, to whom it is permitted to ruin, seduce, deceive and betray and still retain the world's good opinion. They are made such and kept such by men, and they have become the Ishmaelites and outcasts of the race largely because pure and virtuous women the world over refuse to be brought down to the male level, and regard with loathing and horror a vice which degrades the sex as nothing else in the world can.

I think that no one will deny, too, that these social outcasts are, as a class, the most miserable and unhappy of mortals. There is little happiness to be found in degradation, and when to degradation is added social ostracism, their portion is bitter, indeed. Some liberal theologian has defined hell to be "a place in the next world where a soul gets into its own class." The brothel and the house of ill-fame seems to convey the best idea of hell, according to such a definition. The inmates, like the poor lost souls, cannot forget what they have been, what they might have been and what they are. They look upon the faces of the innocent children and remember the innocence and sinlessness of their own childhood days. They see the virtuous maiden, the honored wife, the well-beloved mother taking their rightful places in the world, whilst they stand as beings apart and strangers to the sacred names and blessed ties of hearth and home. "There is no happi-

ness, save in Thee, O God," said Augustine, the sainted penitent. He might well have added: "The farther humanity has wandered from Thee, O God, the less of real happiness it has found and the more degraded morally, the more unhappy it has been." Drunken orgies and transient pleasures of the senses will never fill the void in the heart which was made to love God and that which leads to God. There is no cup of forgetfulness powerful enough to deaden the longing for righteousness, which endures and asserts itself even in the soul of a "fallen woman."

From Out the Fold.

I think it is safe to assume that a goodly percentage of such women have been Catholics by birth and early training. I refer to this not because of any hope which exists of reclaiming them, but because it is well for us from time to time to examine the causes which have contributed to their downfall, in order that we may point out the dangers to those who are liable to follow in their footsteps. One of the saddest things in connection with the whole subject is that so few of them are reclaimed. It is not that they inevitably lose their faith. Many of them retain their faith down to the last, and it is not an uncommon thing for priests to be called on to administer the last sacraments of the Church in the abodes of sin. The chief difficulty so far has been in devising means whereby they may be reclaimed without such reclamation becoming a menace to the virtuous. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd

have done more good in this direction than all the laws and legislators of the Christian world, but I have sometimes felt that our Catholic wives and mothers might do a great deal more than they are doing to rescue at least those who have not yet grown old in sin. It is a strange fact that all modern legislation has failed utterly in every attempt at reform, and the regulation of the social evil still remains an unsolved problem in every city of the Christian world.

White Slavery.

It is at the same time an acknowledged fact that many of those women are veritable slaves, and would be glad of an opportunity to lead better lives. They are not all utterly depraved, and I have heard of many instances in which the better side of their nature stood nobly out for that which they believed to be right. A priest told me the other day of a famous courtesan who had on more than one occasion turned innocent young girls away fom her doors and had helped to support them until such time as they obtained honorable employment. The corruption of the police in many cities constitutes one of the chief obstacles to effective reform. It is the lowest and most detestable form of graft, but it is a form which can be practiced with more or less impunity, as the victims frequently suffer in silence rather than inflict their woes upon a hostile and unsympathetic public. There are good men and good women in every community who are ready to help those people to lead

better lives if they only knew how. This is one of the world's great problems. Its solution lies not so much in removing present evils as in waging an unceasing warfare against the causes of which the evil is the necessary and unfailing consequence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Drink and Temperance.

A Hopeless Case.

Habitual drunkenness has a characteristic not found in the ordinary vices of humanity. It is practically hopeless as far as reform is concerned. Drunkenness is a disease as well as a vice, and the ministrations of the doctor must precede those of the priest.

I have seen it stated somewhere that there are more than a half million habitual drunkards in this country. I do not believe there is any way of arriving at the correct figures in making such an estimate, but grant for argument's sake, that there is only half that number, and the figures are still a sad commentary on the progress of religion and civilization.

We are certainly safe in assuming that a goodly proportion of that army are Catholics by birth and early training. Their religious status is now a matter of little consequence. They are subjects for medical rather than religious care. The greater number of them will fill drunkards' graves, and, as far as society is concerned, the sooner that takes place the better. It is not with such that the genuine advocate of

temperance is concerned. It is with the youth of the land, with those who are now growing to manhood, and anything which helps to save them, no matter how misdirected, is a step in the right direction.

Taking Long Chances.

Personally, I would rather stand by the open grave of a Catholic young man than see him engage in the saloon business as it is conducted in America to-day. Apart from the spiritual danger arising from co-operation in another's sin, no form of casuistry can justify a business whose profits are largely dependent upon depriving defenseless women and innocent children of the means of livelihood. Add to this the necessity of consorting with the lowest elements of society, and the further necessity of aiding and abetting in the physical and moral destruction of so large a proportion of the young manhood of the country, and you have a few of the difficulties confronting a Catholic who is desirous of conducting a decent saloon.

He may do it and save his soul, but it is an extremely hazardous undertaking.

Time and again I have heard it asserted that a majority of the saloon-keepers are Catholics. This assertion we all know to be false, but we know at the same time that there are altogether too many of them in the business for their own good and for the good of the Church. It goes without saying that many of them try their best to conduct their place in conformity

with the dictates of conscience, but for many of them the business has been a curse and a blight.

It is difficult to treat a subject of this kind without indulging in extreme assertions. Fanaticism and wholesale denunciation are the stock-in-trade of nearly all those who assail the liquor traffic from pulpit and platform. As a result of those injudicious and unfair methods temperance agitators have become extremely unpopular. They proceed on the principle that all those who conduct saloons and all those who patronize them are lost souls, and that nothing is severe or harsh enough to say of them. Intoxicating liquors have been used from the beginning of the world, and will be used even until the end. Politics and politicians have made the saloon what it is to-day, and are still the greatest obstacles in the path of true reform.

When we have devised some means whereby the saloon can be kept out of politics, we will have solved one of the nation's gravest problems.

Too Much Rant.

The common fault of our temperance literature is the prevalency of rant and the attempts to prove too much, which usually ends in proving nothing. A certain amount of this may be expected in every form of agitation, but in matters affecting the gospel of total abstinence it is manifestly overdone. And yet we cannot conceal the fact that the advocates of temperance have done and are still doing a vast amount of good. It is evident at the same time to the least observant

that there is still much to be done and much in which right-thinking men and women can have a share. A round of the saloons in any one of our large cities will furnish an earnest man with much food for serious thought. As he looks into the faces of hundreds of depraved human beings, he realizes better than ever before the terrible power for evil of the liquor traffic. The great army of unfortunates, the tramps, vagrants, criminals and useless members of society who make the saloons their headquarters constitute the strongest argument for total abstinence; but these object lessons have been supplied from the beginning and seem to have little effect in turning the world from the drink habit.

A Striking Example.

The reports of officers commissioned by the different nations to study the recent Russo-Japanese War bear out the assertion that the chief cause of the Russian defeat lay in the habitual drunkenness of those in command, both in the army and navy. It has been a practice amongst the Russians from time immemorial to go into battle under the influence of copious draughts of Voodka. As a consequence neither officers nor men were a match for the sober Japanese. Universal drunkenness amongst the Russian officers rendered them incapable of performing their duty at critical moments and the sober nation triumphed. It was a lesson which the Christian nations may well take to heart. Drunken soldiers and sailors are poor custodians of a country's

rights and liberties. It is sad to think that after so many centuries of Christian teaching, the vice of intemperance should exercise so firm a hold upon professedly Christian nations and should be in the midst of this era of intelligence and enlightenment the chief reproach of those who claim to follow Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Why He Gave It Up.

Memory Remains.

And what of him who has given up his religion entirely? He may still call himself a Catholic, but clinging to the name is largely a matter of sentiment. At bottom he knows that to all intents and purposes he has placed himself without the Church's pale. His faith in the old essentials has been greatly modified. He has slowly made a creed to fit his conduct. He has long ago ceased to observe the Church's precept, but God in His mercy will not permit him to forget.

The beautiful old Catholic prayers, which he learned at his mother's knee were the last thing he gave up. The tender memories of that gentle mother who instilled into his heart the first lessons of Catholic piety, of an upright father whose life gave a sanction to the mother's teaching—these are something that will not down. Sometimes now, through force of the old habit he finds himself tempted at night to kneel and ask God to bring back the innocence and peace and faith of childhood's and boyhood's years.

He is not happy. His conscience has become seared and hardened, but troubled thoughts will arise and at times his soul is filled with a nameless terror. In the depths of the night and in the gray dawn of the early morning a swift and terrible vision of God's judgment seat now and again rises before his eyes. These are the last calls to repentance, the signs that precede reprobation and final impenitence. Years ago he had read somewhere in a good book that if a man be lost it will be only after God has pursued him with eternal love and most persevering grace down to the last instant of his existence, only after He has exhausted every means which Divine ingenuity could devise save that of depriving him of man's noblest attribute, freedom itself. He clearly understands that if he become a castaway, he himself, not God, will be to blame. Sometimes he resolves to repent and retrace his steps, but sin and vice have entrenched themselves so firmly in his soul that they have become a part and parcel of his very nature. Nothing but radical measures will avail him now and the Evil One will not easily yield up his prey. He whispers into his heart the cry of the despairing "*Too late!* Too late!" God the All Holy, the All True, bids him turn to Him, even though his sins be as red as scarlet, and receive forgiveness. The Devil, the father of lies, convinces him that the hour of forgiveness and repentance is past.

A Glorious History.

The faith which he has, to all intents and purposes given up, was handed down to him as a precious heri-

tage. It descended to him through the blood and tears of a thousand martyred generations. His ancestors were treated as criminals and branded as felons because they dared to teach it to their children. They lost their earthly possessions sooner than compromise it. Honor and wealth and worldly prosperity waited upon apostasy, but they chose to be poor and ignorant and degraded and wretched for the sake of Christ. They refused the soup and the bogus bible of the famine days and saw their little ones die of hunger rather than rob them of the true Bread of Eternal Life. Some of them stood in the dock and in the face of imprisonment, exile and death proved steadfast and true and won for themselves a place amongst the red-robed martyrs. They went out from the land of their fathers as strangers and wanderers in order that they might be free to practice their faith. Their very love of religion and their devotion to their adopted country made them respected and honored in a free land. All this he knows, but to him who has given up God and the hope of heaven such precious memories have no meaning.

He gave it up in the freest country in the world. He had no social advantage to seek, no political ends in view, no business prospects to subserve. His religion was no bar to political prominence or worldly prosperity. It was not that he had learned in the world of science and letters some new truths that weakened the foundations of his faith. It was simply and solely because the Church of his fathers had insisted upon a standard of morals to which he was unwilling to con-

form, and no matter what the pretexts alleged for his lack of fidelity it was because he chose to serve the world, the flesh and the devil in preference to obedience and humility and self-sacrifice and purity of heart and all those virtues which are characteristic of the true disciple of Christ. And this is why he gave it up. It was God versus Mammon and Mammon triumphed.

Beneath Contempt.

I am not treating here of this weak-kneed time servers, who here and there gave up their religion because they feared it might prove a bar to their social progress or material prosperity. People of this kind whom I have met have been pitiably ignorant both of their religion and of the conditions under which they live. As a rule they excite the ridicule of the non-Catholics whose favor they desire to gain. Americans, more than any other people in the world, respect and honor fidelity to principle. Even the least intelligent amongst them have long since learned that a Catholic who is faithful to his religious convictions is more worthy of trust than one who is ready to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. The best and brainiest amongst them have come to understand that if there be real religion anywhere in the world it is to be found within the Catholic fold. They are not surprised when they hear of men like Newman and Manning and the greatest and best of the age turning to the Church and finding within it peace and security. They can scarcely conceal their contempt for those

weak-minded individuals who desert the old Church because it is not the creed of the fashionable in certain particular localities. It must be said, however, that apostasies of this kind are very rare nowadays. We hear of them, here and there, in a New England village, where the old Puritan spirit still prevails, or amongst poorly instructed foreigners who have suddenly grown rich. The average American Catholic, no matter how fervent or how careless he may be, realizes fully that the flag of his country stands for religious freedom in the fullest sense of the term, and that apostates as a rule are such for revenue only.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Church Extension.

Tells the Story.

The Methodist Church Extension Society recently issued an instructive little map of the United States, with a cross for every mission chapel which the society has founded or aided in founding all over the country. The figures which it presents are well calculated to set us a-thinking. We had been patting ourselves on the back and pointing to our achievements until we have come to believe that the Church in this country is the greatest ever. Up to January 1, 1906, this society had 14,796 churches to its credit. Of this number 776 had been built in Nebraska, 1,028 in Kansas, over 700 in Iowa, and so on all along the line. And this immense aggregate represents the work of the Home Mission Society of

only one non-Catholic sect. The others have not been idle. All of them have come to regard the care of the home missions—in other words, the care of their white American brethren as one of the most important departments of their work. They have gone out into the churchless communities of the country, built little churches and helped to support them wherever there was the faintest promise of future success. The results have justified the wisdom of such a policy. They have taken care of their own members, and have thus obtained many new recruits.

This, however, was a matter in which they naturally had the advantage over us. Priests are not prepared for the sacred ministry in a week or a year. It is a slow and tedious process, and the Church from the earliest days in America was handicapped by a lack of priests. Then, too, there was a tendency to build up the big cities at the expense of the villages, towns and rural communities. When the Catholics were numerous enough and strong enough to take care of themselves in such places, all was well. When they were few and far between, and without courageous leaders to take the initiative they were abandoned to the inevitable. They fell away, not wilfully and designedly, but unwillingly and regretfully, and all because they had neither church nor priest to keep alive in their hearts the truths and principles of Catholic faith. The few priests who were in the field had enough to do in the missions assigned to them, without going out and hunting up the stray sheep in other localities. If the strays chose to remain in such places and bring up families, the result was a foregone conclusion.

Catching Up.

For fifty years the Church in this country has been engaged in a life-and-death struggle merely to hold its own. The great tide of immigration which swept across the American continent gave it all and more than it could do. The best it could do in many places was to make provision for the most pressing needs. As the country developed, new problems presented themselves, but the work was, somehow, always in advance of the workers. Much of it, as a consequence, had to go by default despite every effort on the part of the Church to cope with conditions as they presented themselves.

I believe that it is of the most primary importance that our people should awake to the duty of saving our Catholics right here at home. Our greatest leakage in the past has been in the churchless villages, towns and rural communities all over the country. It is not the few families here and there that count, but is is the enormous aggregate in thousands and tens of thousands of such places. It is too late in the East as far as the pioneers of the last generation are concerned, but it is not too late to make every effort to save the immigrants who are swarming here from European Catholic countries.

During the last fifty years the non-Catholic home mission societies have expended $300,000,000 in the work of building mission churches, and in supporting the clergymen who were assigned to such churches. Were it not for this missionary activity many of the

non-Catholic sects would have suffered greatly from the standpoint of numbers.

I believe that it serves no good purpose to dwell at length upon our losses. Our greatest losses in the past arose from a lack of priests and churches. That lack is still being severe y felt all over the country. Our Catholic people must take a deeper interest in missionary work of every kind, but above all in the work which has for its purpose the saving of our Catholic people right here at home. Here is one of the greatest fields for missionary effort in the world to-day, and a field which up to the present has been too much neglected.

Catholic Immigration no Menace.

The Catholic immigrant is, as a rule, a very desirable citizen. He is God-fearing, honest, industrious and willing to work, and from such people the nation has nothing to fear. It is the native-born American who wants to live without work that is the real menace.

The nation is face to face with much greater dangers than European pauper immigration. Political corruption, commercial dishonesty and the depraved morals of our wealthier classes are matters of much graver moment than the opening of our doors to the deserving poor of Europe.

If the politicians of fifty years ago had prevailed, the United States of today would have scarcely one-third of its present population, slavery would still exist and the aborigines would still occupy the trans-Mississippi country. The poor immigrant of fifty years ago

is to-day the brains and bone and sinew and, I may add, the conscience of the land. Fifty years from now the same thing will be said of the immigrant of to-day.

The moral standard of the Catholic immigrant is, as a rule, much higher than that of the intellectual aristocracy which would bar him out. In this matter it behooves us to refrain from joining in an agitation having for its purpose the exclusion of men and women who come here for the same reasons for which our fathers and brothers came. Let it never be said of us that the children of the poor and the oppressed who found the door of opportunity opened here, rose up to deny to others the rights and privileges accorded to their fathers.

The Real Strays.

The immigrant who strays from the fold by reason of strange conditions and surroundings has at least the semblance of an excuse. He is much less culpable than those who give the lie to their professions, though surrounded by everything calculated to keep them true and faithful. These are the real strays—the sorrow and reproach of the Church in every country in the world. These are the wandering sheep of the house of Israel, whose salvation is the one great problem in the life of the true pastor of souls.

They live side by side with the faithful. They meet and mingle with them in the affairs of daily life. They still proclaim themselves believers, but fail to give outward expression to their inward belief. There is no possibility of estimating their numbers, but they are to

be found everywhere. Every parish has its quota. In some localities the proportion is higher than in others, and in the larger cities, particularly in the West, they frequently outnumber the fervent and the devout. Everywhere they present the same characteristics. They come to church only at rare intervals, and seldom or never approach the sacraments. They eschew the good old practices of piety which are so important in keeping alive the true Catholic spirit. Amongst their non-Catholic neighbors they wish it to be understood that their Catholicity is of a broader and more liberal kind than that professed by the average member of the Church. If they have children, their religious instruction is the last thing to receive attention. The wisdom and experience of nineteen centuries counts for little when it is a question of a Christian education. They are wiser than the Church universal, and its enactments are the result of old fogy ideas which are not worthy of serious attention. They are seldom to be found on the right side of any Catholic question on matters of faith and morals, and frequently are tainted with various forms of modern error.

A Needed Campaign.

The Church sends devoted missionairies to pagan lands whilst so important a field for missionary effort exists right here at our door. Perhaps it is because it entertains little hope for the conversion of people whose resistance of God's grace is so flagrant and inexcusable. And yet it cannot be said that there is no hope. In nine cases out of ten their condition is the

result of human frailty and that gradual neglect into which any one is liable to fall in spiritual matters. There is very little positive malice in the world. Evil habits are formed much more readily than good ones. There is always hope, however, as long as life lasts. And I have frequently found that many of such people are merely waiting for a word of friendly encouragement, and that they are more eager to return to the paths of righteousness than they are to persevere in their evil course.

This is a missionary work in which every earnest man and woman can co-operate. I have personally known sinners of long standing to be converted through the medium of innocent children, who scarcely realized the results of their childish efforts. When advice and exhortation and encouragement fail, we can at least have recourse to prayer, and particularly prayer to Mary, the Refuge of Sinners. When all hope seems lost, her love and compassion for the stray sheep will interfere in wondrous ways to save them from the very jaws of perdition.

I would like to see a campaign to win back our "ought-to-be" Catholics inaugurated everywhere throughout the country. It is a movement in which priests and laity can cheerfully unite, and one worthy of the best efforts of every earnest lover of the faith.

I saw, the other day, a little leaflet issued by the Catholic Total Abstinence Union. The motto was, "You can win one at least. Why not do it?" That would be a good motto for such a campaign. There are few who cannot win one soul to God if they will only try. And why not begin here and now?

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